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# **Exercising Virtue**

## **The Physical Reform of the Leisured Elite in Eighteenth-Century France**

**By**

**Chloe Louise Underwood**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of Warwick, Department of History  
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## Abstract

This PhD project examines changing conceptions of physical exercise and bodily health in eighteenth-century France.

Enlightenment culture in Europe provided an atmosphere of reform within which both society and individual were viewed as malleable. A new criterion of social utility governed discussions of health and education, and highlighted the unreformed status of certain sections of society. There was an understanding in France that urban life generally, and the urban elite in particular, had degenerated. The idleness of the *gens du monde* was considered a significant factor in the corruption of modern French society; the physical languor it produced was seen to render people useless to the nation. Fears surrounding depopulation and military weakness gave further impetus to calls for reform. Good health and the physical strength associated with it were perceived to key to the reversal of both urban decline and military fragility. The mother-to-be, the child and the noble officer were targeted in the drive to produce healthy, virtuous citizens.

The thesis argues that a transformed conceptualization of physical education, emerging from a preoccupation with preventive medicine, was central to ideas regarding the health and strength of the nation. Drawing on manuals concerned with health and education, discussions of health in the press, polemics on the function of the nobility, and the correspondence of the *Société Royale de Médecine*, a distinct shift is traced in the ways in which exercise was discussed in the second half of the century. This was characterised by a view of exercise which focused upon adding strength and vigour, in contrast to earlier accounts which defined movement as a means of balancing or stabilizing what entered or exited the body.

In reformed discussions of exercise, the Spartan, the savage and the peasant were held up as models of health, from which the wealthy could learn. However, the advice given by the enlightened physician enabled city dwellers to exercise their bodies within an urban context. As the market for health expanded, exercise became a commodity purchasable by the elite, in the form of a conduct manual, a programme of physical education or a swimming lesson.

## *Introduction*

D'ailleurs la pureté des mœurs, compagne de la vie simple et frugale de nos ancêtres, formoit, pour ainsi dire, le sol fertile où cette plante précieuse croissoit et se multiplioit naturellement, sans avoir presque besoin d'aucune culture. Mais depuis que le luxe, la mollesse et tous les vices qu'ils traînent à leur suite, ont altéré ce fond inépuisable de population, il s'est détérioré par degrés: ses productions devenues moins nombreuses et plus foibles, n'ont pu fournir qu'une semence de mauvaise qualité et souvent inféconde; enfin la dépopulation s'est fait sentir au point de ne pouvoir plus se la dissimuler.<sup>1</sup>

In 1771, the artillery officer and author, Jean-Louis de Fourcroy de Guillerville (1717-1799), employed the popular analogy of the child as a sapling in order to illustrate the idea that only a fertile soil (or rather a virtuous environment) could nurture good citizens.<sup>2</sup> In the above passage, Fourcroy raised concerns which were commonly held in discussions of health, education and military reform. Firstly, he asserted that earlier societies, thanks to their simplicity, had produced a thriving population. However, due to luxury and weakness, society had degenerated to the detriment of the health and strength of its members. This dissipation had produced a

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Louis de Fourcroy de Guillerville, *Lettres sur l'éducation physique des enfans* (Amiens, 1771), p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, biographical details have been taken from J. Balteau et al. (eds.), *Dictionnaire de biographie française* (Paris, 1933-); M. M. Dezeimeris, and Ollivier et al. (eds.), *Dictionnaire historique de la médecine ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1828); N. F. J. Eloy (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la médecine ancienne et moderne, ou mémoires disposés en ordre alphabétique pour servir à l'histoire de cette science, et à celle des médecines, anatomistes, botanistes, chirurgiens, et chymistes de toutes nations* (Monds, 1778).

crisis of depopulation which could no longer be ignored. The whole of society was implicated in the call to replenish and reform.

It is the contention of this thesis that a transformed conceptualization of physical exercise played a critical role in calls to improve the health and strength of the nation. Within discussions of luxury and idleness, the body was identified as in need of reform. Enlightened debates surrounding the active body formed part of an extensive movement to restore virtue to French citizenship. Exercise was viewed as pivotal in combatting the ill-effects of society's degeneration.

### **Exercise in Eighteenth-Century France**

I became interested in the subject of exercise whilst researching my MA dissertation, which examined eighteenth-century health manuals.<sup>3</sup> It was apparent that within this genre, movement was an important topic of enquiry. Health manuals uniformly took as their structure the Classical study of hygiene. A form of preventive medicine, hygiene considered the use and abuse of external influences upon the body, known as the six non-naturals. These were air, food and drink, movement and rest, sleep and waking, retentions and evacuations and the passions of the soul. If managed properly through the correct régime, the non-naturals were believed to prevent the contra-naturals (diseases) from attacking the naturals (bodily functions). Exercise (movement and rest), as one of the six so-called 'non-naturals', featured highly in each health manual consulted. However, the study of hygiene was re-worked by eighteenth-century medical concerns. A new programme of preventive medicine preoccupied French medical reformers in the later eighteenth century. The



‘new hygiene’, as I have termed it, was developed in a wide range of forums, from health manuals and medical journals to the correspondence of institutions such as the *Académie Royale des Sciences* and the *Société Royale de Médecine*. Bodily movement formed a vital part of the conservative régime which was portrayed as a principal means of maintaining health.

Medical literature concerned with health preservation forms the core of my research. However, this body of material is as useful to the cultural historian as it is to the medical historian. I have not examined the health literature in terms of its ‘scientific’ value. Instead, I have traced the wider social and political agendas with which discussions of exercise were concerned.<sup>4</sup> The re-conceptualization of exercise within medical literature also informed further debates concerning bodily movement. The call to exercise featured highly in prominent Enlightenment discussions on depopulation, urban degeneration, military improvement and educational reform. It was also adopted by entrepreneurs in order to market their initiatives within a competitive market-place. Therefore, this thesis is primarily concerned not with the gathering of technical data concerning the different types of exercise which were available in the eighteenth-century social world, but with the concept of exercise, itself. How were ideas relating to exercise utilised? What informed them? Why was the concept of the body in motion important to Enlightenment concerns?

Despite the recent interest demonstrated by historians in preventive medicine and concepts of the healthy body, exercise has been a neglected topic in medical

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<sup>3</sup> Chloe Parkin, ‘The Virtue of Health: A study of French health manuals published in the second half of the eighteenth century’, MA dissertation, University of Warwick, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> See L. J. Jordanova, ‘The Popularization of Medicine: Tissot on Onanism’, *Textual Practice*, 1 (1987), p. 68. Jordanova suggests that one way of averting the problem of a dualism between science



history. We lack an integrated understanding of exercise as a culturally and historically-situated phenomenon. There has been a tendency by medical historians to neglect the reasoning behind medical practices that we would deem to be ‘correct’. It is important, as Bynum advises, to closely examine what we consider to be common-sense practices since they, too, have their ‘theoretical underpinnings’.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis placed in the eighteenth century upon diet, exercise and fresh air is in danger of being taken for granted, rather than investigated.

Furthermore, existing histories of physical education cannot be taken as models for exploring eighteenth-century exercise. Dating from the 1950s, narratives of the history of modern physical education, from the Ancient Greeks to Nazi Germany, tend to be ‘insider’ histories, written by teachers of physical education for the benefit of their students.<sup>6</sup> It is primarily the ‘successful’ ventures or landmarks that are outlined in these stories of exercise – therefore, similarities with our own use of physical exercise form the basis of these works. Such writings are built upon the premise that physical education is good for mind and soul, and do not examine the motivation behind discussions of physical education and attitudes towards the body. Here, exercise is not viewed as a historically-specific phenomenon, but as an unchanging universal concept. Due to the absence of institutional developments,

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and society is to treat the health texts as literature and so ignore the ‘epistemological status’ of their content, in order to be sensitive to their various influences.

<sup>5</sup> W. F. Bynum, ‘Health, Disease and Medical Care’ in G. S. Rousseau and R. Porter (eds.), *The Ferment of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 233.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, E. W. Gerber, *Innovators and Institutions in Physical Education* (Philadelphia, 1971); F. E. Leonard, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education* (Westport, 1949); P. C. McIntosh and J. G. Dixon et al., *Landmarks in the History of Physical Education* (London, 1981), first published in 1957; E. A. Rice and J. L. Hutchinson et al., *A Brief History of Physical Education*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, 1969); J. Ulmann, *De la Gymnastique aux sports modernes: Histoire des doctrines de l’éducation physiques* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1989); D. B. Van Dalen and B. L. Bennett, *A World History of Physical Education: Cultural, Philosophical, Comparative* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Jersey, 1971).

such as the physical education centres that were established in Germany and Scandinavia, France in the eighteenth century is all but ignored.

More recent studies of physical exercise are far more integrated. Research carried out in the 1970s and 1980s on the history and sociology of nineteenth and twentieth-century British sport engages with other disciplines such as labour history (the rise of the working-class sport spectator), the history of leisure (the transformation of the working week) and writing on gender and the shaping of masculine identities through physical activity (the making of the public school boy).<sup>7</sup> However, although this body of work is useful in that it successfully highlights the centrality of physical culture to issues of class and gender, its focus upon the industrialized society of the nineteenth century ensures that it cannot be taken as a model of understanding for eighteenth-century France.

### **Positioning Exercise within the ‘New Medical History’**

During the last thirty years, the remit of medical history has broadened significantly.<sup>8</sup> Whereas traditional histories were concerned primarily with diseases and their cures, more recent approaches have focused upon the wider social and cultural role of medicine. As a result, the study of the eighteenth century has come alive with new ideas and discussion. This period was largely ignored by more

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<sup>7</sup> See W. Vamplew, ‘Sport and Industrialization: An Economic Interpretation of the changes in Popular Sport in Nineteenth-Century England’, in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700-1914* (London, 1988); G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983); P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London, 1978); Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London, 1978); J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Education Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981); B. Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the changes in opinion on the nature of medicine, see P. Wright and A. Teacher, *The Problem of Medical Knowledge: Examining the Social Construction of Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1982).



traditional histories of science and medicine because it was viewed as a time of medical failure; a no-mans land between the scientific successes of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. However, with the 'new medical history', the eighteenth century has progressed from being viewed as a period of stagnation, to one of transformation.<sup>9</sup> This is partly due to the fact that tangible medical progress has been mapped in the shift from mortality to morbidity. The three major killers of medieval society (war, famine and plague) yielded, allowing chronic disease to become more prominent, as the population of Europe lived longer.<sup>10</sup> Most crucially, the concept of health has come to be regarded as a central issue in Enlightenment thought.

Whereas traditional medical histories were concerned with chronicling discoveries of specific cures for specific ailments, the new medical historians, influenced in particular by social history and gender studies, have widened the scope of enquiry and discovered a world of preventive medical theory and practice that had hitherto been ignored.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the dichotomy between progress and tradition, initiated by earlier studies, has broken down, thus permitting a meaningful discussion

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<sup>9</sup> Colin Jones, in his article, 'The 'New Medical History' in France: The view from Britain', *The French Historian* 2 (1987), pp. 3-14, discusses the revolution in the history of medicine over the last thirty years, and analyses the 'colonisation' of medical history by professional historians in the 1970s and their transformation of the discipline from traditional histories of disease written largely by doctors, to far more integrated studies of all aspects of health and disease within society.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of this demographic phenomenon, see L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997), 'The Pathosystem in Transition: From Mortality to Morbidity?', pp. 356-70.

<sup>11</sup> Ginie Smith has argued that preventive medicine has been neglected in favour of curative medicine. See G. Smith, 'Prescribing the Rules of Health: Self-help and Advice in the late Eighteenth Century', in R. Porter (ed.), *The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850* (London, 1992), pp. 249-82.

of the continued use of Classical medicine and its manipulation at the hands of eighteenth-century scholars.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis examines medical literature which has been treated by other historians as 'popular'. Matthew Ramsey argues that although the popularization of medicine is inherently timeless as medical knowledge can never be wholly controlled by licensed practitioners, it can nevertheless be viewed as a specific historical phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> He uses, as his definition of popularization, the model set out by Jacques Poirier: 'making the concepts and techniques of scientific medicine, the cognitive field of medical professionals, accessible to non-professionals so as to allow them to promote their own health'.<sup>14</sup> According to Ramsey, this process needs two criteria in order to make it popular: the existence of a medical corpus to which the popular work refers, together with the simplification and glamorization ('reduction/seduction') of the information contained in the corpus in order for it to appeal to a wider audience. Despite his acknowledgement of certain problems with Poirier's theory (for example, that it assumes the one-way diffusion of information from scientists to laymen, without investigating the influence of 'society' upon science), Ramsey asserts that medical popularization was a product of Western history between the late seventeenth century and the end of the nineteenth century. Ludmilla Jordanova also locates a proliferation of medical and scientific works 'which can only be described as popular' during the Enlightenment, despite

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<sup>12</sup> For an example of a historian who views the eighteenth century in terms of medical progress and tradition, see J. McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing Attitudes to Death Amongst Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> M. Ramsey, 'The Popularization of Medicine in France, 1650-1900' in Porter (ed.), *The Popularization of Medicine*, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

acknowledging that popularization provides an 'unfortunate dualism' between science and society.<sup>15</sup>

However, the term 'popular' is defined against the 'modern' view of the professional - a view that is not necessarily appropriate for the eighteenth-century medical world. By placing artificial boundaries between learned and popular culture, historians have set themselves a theoretical framework which is inappropriate to the material under examination:

The very language we use (e.g. 'popularization') belongs to a discourse of analysis that is ideologically and culturally loaded: as it assumes differences or boundaries between cultures and classes, so it assumes that the only object of analysis is the transfer of cultural items across such boundaries.<sup>16</sup>

Eighteenth-century culture was marked by unity and openness, and medical knowledge was shared by, added to and influenced by a far wider community than the terms 'professional' and 'popular' permit us to imagine. In addition, we must widen our understanding of the concerns of the medical profession, as certain subjects that concern the eighteenth-century physician appear to us to have very little relevance to health and disease.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the thesis I have adopted an anti-teleological stance in order to explore the eighteenth century on its own terms. There has been a traditional

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<sup>15</sup> Jordanova, 'The Popularization of Medicine', p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> R. Cooter and S. Pumfrey, 'Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularization and Science in Popular Culture', *History of Science*, 32 (1994), p. 248.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Duden's inspiring book, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Eng. Trans. (Cambridge Mass., 1991), shows that our own conceptions of medical knowledge are not suitable either to explain, or to understand, past conceptions of sickness and healing.



tendency by social historians to treat the century as a prelude to the Revolutionary decade. More recently, the late eighteenth century has been explored by gender historians as the period in which women were first assigned to the life of domesticity - a development that culminated in the nineteenth century. However, as Barbara Duden has remarked, the study of how the modern body emerged, and how people in the past viewed their bodies, should be two separate tasks.<sup>18</sup> The search for origins, be it of a revolution or the subordination of women, obscures the complexity and variety of eighteenth-century debates concerning the development of society.

### **The Negotiation of Medical Authority**

The eighteenth century has been regarded as a period in which the 'sick-man' maintained authority in the medical relationship between client and practitioner.<sup>19</sup> To a certain extent, this was the case. The paying customer held a powerful role within a competitive medical market-place. Furthermore, the educated lay-reader had access to largely the same medical information as the physician, and through postal consultation actively contributed to the terms of his or her condition. Jewson has contended that it was with the advance of hospital medicine in the nineteenth century that the clinician took control of the medical relationship.<sup>20</sup> I argue, in contrast, that the physician also found a number of ways to seize authority within the 'private' medical world of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Chapter One 'Toward a History of the Body'.

<sup>19</sup> See N. D. Jewson, 'The Disappearance of the Sick-Man from Medical Cosmology, 1770-1870', *Sociology*, 10 (1976), pp. 221-44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



Firstly, within the traditional relationship between client and practitioner, the client conferred authority upon his or her personal physician.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, through the publication of health advice, physicians projected their medical (world) view into the homes of their potential clients. Whilst in the seventeenth century information on the conservation of health emanated from charitable or religious sources, in the second half of the eighteenth century we witness what one may term a ‘medical take-over’ of health literature, wherein the new hygiene became the preserve of the licensed practitioner.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, physicians associated themselves with the physical reform of groups, in addition to individuals. Through involvement with initiatives to improve the physical education of children and the military training of both officers and soldiers, they broadened the remit of the medical domain. Lastly, through the profile of institutions such as the *Société Royale de Médecine* and the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, the physician claimed authority over a range of public initiatives which served to medicalise particular activities such as swimming and bathing.<sup>23</sup>

Eighteenth-century health advice generally focused upon the body of the individual. However, the distinction made by certain historians between the private health of the *Ancien Régime*, and the public health of the Revolution and the nineteenth century, fails to consider the State’s interest in health during the former.<sup>24</sup> Social utility was of the utmost importance in discussions of improvement. The

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<sup>21</sup> See E. Spary, ‘Self-indulgence: taste, eating and authority in enlightened France’, in her forthcoming book *Eating the Enlightenment*.

<sup>22</sup> See below, Chapter One, Section ‘The Health Manuals’ and Chapter Three, Section ‘The Physician as Nature’s Interpreter’.

<sup>23</sup> See below, Chapter Seven.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, W. Coleman, ‘Health and Hygiene in the *Encyclopédie*: A Medical Doctrine for the Bourgeoisie’, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, xxix (1974), pp. 399-431.

reform of its members was central to discussions of the strength of the State. Only healthy citizens, it was argued, could be useful to their country.

### **The ‘Crisis Mentality’**

In the eighteenth-century battle between the Ancients and the Moderns, it was the Ancients who informed debates on bodily health. The idea that urban life was somehow in decline shaped discussions of exercise. One of the reasons why Ancient society was viewed as a model for eighteenth-century France was the emphasis placed therein upon good health, through the promotion of exercise as part of daily life. Harvey Chisick maintains that in the last twenty-five years of the *Ancien Régime* there was a ‘crisis mentality’; a belief that the luxury of a wealthy urban minority acted as a corrupting and corroding influence which resulted in widespread depopulation.<sup>25</sup> Good health was therefore viewed as inextricably linked to lifestyle, or moral worth. Furthermore, as Chisick notes, population was taken as an ‘index of national well-being’.<sup>26</sup> It impacted upon both the military and the commercial standing of the State. The vigour of private individuals was of prime public concern, as healthiness and usefulness were conflated in constructions of the citizen. Conversely, there was a close proximity between idleness and illness in discussions of social reform.

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<sup>25</sup> The population in the eighteenth century has subsequently been shown by demographers to have risen very steeply, rather than declined, in this period. The eighteenth-century debate over depopulation has been discussed by J. Dupâquier, *La Population française au xvii et xviii siècles* (Paris, 1979), pp. 70-124, and J. Perrot, ‘Les Économistes, les philosophes et la population’ in J. Dupâquier (ed.), *Histoire de la population française*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> H. Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1981), p. 188.

Health writers looked to Antiquity for models of improvement. They also drew on ideals of nature. As Dorinda Outram contends, the term 'nature' carried an ethical weighting in addition to its reference to the physical world:

Thus 'nature' became a description of a moral ideal as well as of a scientifically discernible order, and was thus seen as something which could reside in the hearts of men, as much as being an external order visible and tangible and measurable to natural philosophers.<sup>27</sup>

Within discussions which idealized the 'natural', the corruption of the town was pitted against the virtuous innocence of rural life. The country was held up against the town as a model of health and vitality from which the inhabitants of the *grandes villes* would do well to learn. Donald Charlton argues that the Ancient contrast between town and country, which attributed the former to the work of man and the latter to the action of God, shifted in the eighteenth century from an 'agreeable convention' to a 'deeply-felt opposition'.<sup>28</sup> According to Charlton, this new tension in eighteenth-century Europe between town and country can be seen to emerge as a consequence of both the onset of industrialization (although this was mainly with reference to England) and the re-assessment of the 'natural' (by writers such as Rousseau) during this period. In his study of European art and literature, Charlton has attributed a number of binary oppositions to the new town/country divide - corrupt/virtuous, misery/happiness, unhealthy/healing - which contribute greatly to an examination of discussions of physical reform.

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<sup>27</sup> D. Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> See D. G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History 1750-1800* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 178.



## Continuity and Change

In the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a fundamental shift in the ways in which exercise, as a means to promote health, was conceptualized within medical literature. Discussions of health were essentially structured by eighteenth-century versions of the medical language of Antiquity; particularly by the theory of hygiene and its use of the non-naturals. Exercise, as a non-natural, traditionally focused upon humoral balance. Its use concentrated upon moderating what entered and exited the body. However, in the second half of the eighteenth century exercise was redefined as an activity that should strengthen and toughen the body. Thus, a more dynamic model of the body emerged to replace an earlier static version. The effects of exercise were measured by increased bodily health, but more importantly by an inner moral virtue.

Through an examination of the treatment of the non-natural ‘movement and rest’, the thesis traces a shift which became pronounced in the 1760s. However, to regard this decade as important is not to suggest that reformed ideas concerning exercise were not present prior to 1760, or indeed that more traditional models of the body did not continue to be significant in the latter years of the *Ancien Régime*. Nevertheless, certain events of the 1760s served to focus and crystallise discussions of health and exercise, providing a direction and momentum which had been hitherto unknown. The new model of the body found in medical literature was influenced by Enlightenment concerns, and in turn impacted upon broader discussions of social improvement. Furthermore, I suggest that the model of exercise presented by the ‘new hygiene’ exerted a greater influence on wider debates concerning physical reform, from national education to military training.

The events which stimulated discussions of physical reform were the expulsion from France of the religious teaching order known as the Jesuits, the defeats of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the publication of two texts which marked a watershed in writing concerning health and exercise: the health manual by the Swiss physician Samuel Auguste Tissot, *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* (1761) and the educational treatise by the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou de l'Éducation* (1762).

The expulsion of the Jesuits raised the practical question of who should teach the nation's children. It provoked a debate on the merits of establishing a national education system, which considered afresh the structure and content of schooling. Here, physical education featured prominently. The humiliating losses of the Seven Years War brought into sharp focus earlier discussions of the shortcomings of military training, and encouraged debates on the degenerate state of the body of the noble officer. *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile* were best-sellers. The influence of Rousseau and Tissot was such that they served to shape the attitude of the public sphere towards health and exercise. They were viewed by their contemporaries as health revolutionaries. Within the thesis, I have dedicated a chapter to Rousseau and Tissot, and have examined both texts in some detail. In doing this, I am not suggesting that these authors were solely responsible for a change in the way that exercise was perceived, or that the ideas expressed in their work were original. As Harvey Chisick has argued with reference to Rousseau, the popularity of *Avis au*

*Peuple* and *Émile* probably indicates that the texts contributed to, and encouraged, an *existing* climate of opinion.<sup>29</sup>

### **Marketing Exercise**

The shift in the conceptualization of exercise within health literature was made possible by an explosion in print culture, which in turn was encouraged by an audience receptive to a particular brand of self-help (or ‘how to’) literature.<sup>30</sup> In the eighteenth century, there was a new target audience for health advice - the leisured elite. Whereas seventeenth-century health manuals drew on a charitable tradition which focused upon benefiting the rural poor, the peasant came to be held up during the second half of the eighteenth century as a model of health from which a degenerate wealthy minority could learn. The market for health extended far beyond the printed word, and the virtue of exercise was used to market and sell a range of products and initiatives.

Exercise became a carefully structured and subtle mechanism by which health could be maintained within the existing social structure of urban living. Although the peasant was identified as an ideal of health and strength, the enlightened physician ensured that the urban elite did not have to live like peasants in order to be healthy. As we shall see, Rousseau’s call for exercise to encompass physical hardship and personal risk was distilled into the promotion of rigorous physical activity within a safe and supervised environment.

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<sup>29</sup> Chisick, *The Limits of Reform*, p. 203.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the trend for self-help literature, see J. Gurkin Altman, ‘Political Ideology in the Letter Manual (France, England, New England)’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 18 (1988), pp. 105-22.



As a purchaseable item, health was only available to those who could afford it. As William Coleman has said of the ‘people’ in the eighteenth century: ‘their lot demanded that they seek not health, an abstract good available only to the leisured, but efficacious means to restore the ailing when stricken’.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the pursuit of health could only be a pastime for a certain level of society. Historians employing Norbert Elias’ ‘civilizing process’ have argued that new practices in personal grooming trickled down from the aristocracy to broader sections of society.<sup>32</sup> More recently, it has been asserted that the rising concern with health in the eighteenth century originated from the bourgeoisie as a means to distinguish themselves from court life. According to this approach, this bourgeois self-fashioning was only later adopted by enlightened sections of the nobility.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the production of health-related products and information largely emanated from the bourgeoisie, but as Rebecca Spang argues, ‘Across social divisions and professional allegiances, health was a shared goal of Enlightenment culture’. The consumption of health ‘united rather than distinguished’ the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.<sup>34</sup> Drawn from the Second and Third Estates, an urban elite, allied by its wealth, was the focus of health advice.

The vast increase in the publication of health literature advocating a conservative régime both reflected and augmented the social value of health amongst the urban elite. The article ‘Santé’ (1765), contained in the *Encyclopédie*, said of

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<sup>31</sup> W. Coleman, ‘The People’s Health: Medical Themes in Eighteenth-Century French Popular Culture’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 51 (1977), p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> See, N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, Eng. Trans. (Oxford, 1994) and R. Chartier (ed.), *A History of Private Life: III Passions of the Renaissance*, Eng. Trans. (Harvard, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Eng. Trans. (London, 1984); Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*; G. Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: From Feudalism to Enlightenment*, Eng. Trans. (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant* (Cambridge Mass., 2000), p. 27.

health: ‘c’est l’état le plus parfait de la vie’.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, to be ill was to be in a state between life and death; a state which was not fully human. As the article ‘Maladie’ (1765) commented: ‘c’est en général l’état de l’animal vivant, qui ne jouit pas de la santé; c’est la vie physique dans un état d’imperfection’.<sup>36</sup>

The new hygiene was predominantly secular in tone. The absence of God in eighteenth-century health manuals set them apart from the advice of the previous century. Health was now viewed as an obtainable goal, as opposed to an abstract ideal. However, medical literature continued to explain health and disease in a manner which was informed by its own version of morality. In this way, the achievement of health was marketed as a matter of personal virtue.

## Thesis Structure

Chapter One will explore the context for the cultural shift in discussions of exercise in France from the 1760s. The terms ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘public sphere’ will be examined with reference to their applicability to an investigation of the transmission and dissemination of debates on health: who produced this literature?; what were the reasons for doing so?; who were the consumers?; why did they read these publications? I will consider the media by which information on health preservation was distributed. The chapter will examine the structural and stylistic differences between health literature of the second half of the eighteenth century, and

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<sup>35</sup> Jaucourt, ‘Santé’, in Diderot and d’Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772), vol. 14, pp. 628-30.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Maladie’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 9, p. 930. Jordanova discusses the state of *maladie* in ‘The Popularization of Medicine’, p. 69.

earlier texts. It will indicate that health was a key Enlightenment concern, and that contemporaries perceived a revolution in health to be taking place.

The roles of Rousseau and Tissot in both shaping a more dynamic model of the body, and in encouraging a new audience for health advice, will be discussed in Chapter Two. The authors are accorded particular attention, since through careful examination of the texts we can draw out key themes and issues which heavily influenced later attitudes to health, and writing thereon. The chapter will explore the traditions from which Rousseau and Tissot disengaged, and will seek to explain why these two texts encouraged a preoccupation with health amongst the urban elite. I will discuss why the publications mark a watershed in discussions of the body.

Chapter Three will chart the transformation within health literature of the category 'mouvement et repos'. It will examine the role of the *Encyclopédie* project in providing a distillation of accepted knowledge concerning the body. There will be a discussion of the non-naturals; the fact that they are a neglected phenomenon in medical history will be highlighted, together with the reasons why they are useful to the historian of eighteenth-century France. The chapter will investigate how the non-naturals acted as a gauge of virtue – a means to criticise certain sections of society (the fashionable) and to idealize others (the peasants). It will explore the connection made in health literature between idleness and illness; there was a questioning of natural weakness, and an emphasis on the ability of the individual, regardless of status or gender, to achieve health and strength through increased physical activity. The recommendation of health writers, that a more 'natural' style of life be pursued within an urban environment, will be discussed. I will consider the idealization of



nature and Antiquity, with particular reference to the fact that eighteenth-century commentators sought not to reject modern civilization, but to modify it.

Chapters Four, Five and Six, respectively, will examine particular sections of the upper echelons of society who were targeted for reform – women, children and the military officer. These chapters should be read as interlinking case studies.

Chapter Four will study a sub-group of the leisured elite which was identified in health literature as in need of improvement; namely, women. Recent accounts have emphasised the ways in which eighteenth-century medical discourse highlighted the physiological differences between man and woman, and justified the perceived delicacy (domesticity) of women on a scientific basis. However, eighteenth-century medical literature on exercise stressed the essential similarities between the sexes, and contended that bodily weakness was not innate in women, but was encouraged through a sedentary style of life. It was the approach to the marketing of health advice for men and women which differed. I will argue that discussions surrounding the health of women need to be viewed as part of a wider drive for social improvement. Through the example of the Genevan physician Théodore Tronchin, I will explore the significance of women as consumers of health.

In Chapter Five, I will examine a second key Enlightenment concern – education. There were debates surrounding the malleability of man and the transforming power of education. These discussions were accorded focus by the expulsion of the Jesuit teaching order, which had been hitherto responsible for the lion's share of secondary education. The body has been neglected by histories of education, but the combined instruction of the mind and body was a central feature of eighteenth-century pedagogical literature. The influence of the doctrine known as

'hygiene' was apparent in education manuals, and this chapter will explore the importance of the role of the physician to educational initiatives. I will use the example of the physicians Jean Verdier and Guillaume Daignan to investigate the physician's use of nature within a controlled environment.

The significance of exercise within debates surrounding the military nobility will be discussed in Chapter Six. In the 1750s, there was a polemic on the function of the Second Estate, which focused upon how best the male noble should earn his honour. Should the noble adhere exclusively to a military career, or should he enter the world of commerce and contribute, additionally, to the financial standing of the State? The centrality of the body within these accounts will be highlighted. The traditional identity of the noble as warrior had been compromised by the growth of the robe nobility, but in this chapter I will argue that the importance of physical prowess was reinstated in the eighteenth century in the light of discussions of degeneration, luxury and wilful idleness. The noble officer was held accountable for the defeats of the Seven Years War. However, his physical reform was perceived to hold the key to French military revival. The chapter will explore how the concept of the natural warrior instinct was displaced by the necessity to maintain health and strength through physical training, as seen in the case of the *Ecole Royale Militaire*. The body of the noble was subjected to the same medical scrutiny as that of the mother-to-be and the infant, thus challenging its supposed superiority. Discussions of gender in eighteenth-century France have tended to focus upon the female, but I will argue here that an examination of the male reveals a shared set of concerns.

In Chapter Seven, I will use the case of swimming in Paris to explore how discussions of a reformed model of the body were utilised and manipulated by

educationalists and entrepreneurs in order to offer practical solutions to the issue of physical weakness. The chapter will trace how swimming came to be associated with virtuous behaviour. Through the case of swimming in Paris, I will explore the ways in which ideas concerning exercise, informed by the idealization of the natural, were negotiated and utilised within a commercial urban milieu. I will investigate the procedural issues pertaining to the development of a swimming establishment, and will examine Turquin's swimming school as a case study. The influence which the medical world gained over swimming as an activity will be highlighted.

The conclusion will consider the fate of physical education in the nineteenth century. I will pursue the fortunes of Turquin's swimming school, into the Revolution and beyond.



## Chapter One

### *Health and Exercise in the Enlightened Public Sphere*

#### **Introduction**

The eighteenth century witnessed a fundamental shift in the way in which physical exercise was perceived in France. This change was played out largely in a reformed health literature emergent in the second half of the century. However, exercise also featured highly in debates on education and military reform.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this chapter is to explore the cultural context for the development of what I will term the ‘new hygiene’.

Enlightenment culture provided an atmosphere of reform within which both society and individual were viewed as malleable.<sup>2</sup> As illustrated by Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772), arguably the most conspicuous manifestation of the Enlightenment Project, health was a key site of debate and reflection on the perfectibility of man.<sup>3</sup> A rapidly expanding print culture, serving a broadening sector of the population, facilitated the spread of both new and reprinted literature on health. The rise in interest in procuring a healthy body was marked by two particular publications: Samuel Auguste Tissot’s *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé*, (1761), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Émile; ou de l’Éducation* (1762). These texts acted as catalysts for the acceleration of interest in health amongst a largely urban reading public. This preoccupation with physical well-being encouraged the expansion of the market for health literature from the 1760s. Information was

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<sup>1</sup> Literature on education and military reform will be explored in Chapters Five and Six, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> H. Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1981), p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Diderot and d’Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772).

circulated in health manuals, medical and general periodicals and in advertising journals. Learned societies, *salons*, and *musées* also offered spaces for the exchange and development of ideas about physical reform.

Demand for health information emanated from an enlightened public sphere. However, physical reform was also a matter of concern for the French State. Strong and healthy citizens, it was argued, were integral to the country's potency. The language of patriotism and citizenship was employed in both arenas, as a new criterion of social utility governed discussions on the education of the individual and highlighted the unreformed status of certain sections of society.

Authorship of the new hygiene literature was predominantly, although not exclusively, the preserve of medical men. Physicians and educated surgeons carved out a role for themselves as commentators on the public's health. They targeted a wealthy urban audience, whose physical state was characterised as in particular need of reform. Within this market, women emerged as prominent consumers of health advice. Although the target audience was elite, information on exercise reached a broad audience, due to the duplication of health literature in a wide range of journals and gazettes. Entrepreneurs utilised the language of the new hygiene to market their products and initiatives.

The chapter will begin with an examination of the terms 'Enlightenment' and 'public sphere' and their utility to a discussion of health in eighteenth-century France. Next, Rousseau and Tissot will be introduced as health revolutionaries. Here, the emphasis will not be on the content of their work, but on their significance

within the publishing world and their impact upon health literature.<sup>4</sup> We will then discuss the different media involved in the transmission of health information, the producers of this literature and its audience - both target and actual.

## **The Enlightened Public Sphere**

Dorinda Outram, in her 1995 synthesis on the Enlightenment, highlights the shifts in definition that the term has undergone in recent years at the hands of eighteenth-century scholars.<sup>5</sup> No longer considered to be the sum of a unitary set of ideas proposed by a few great *philosophes*, the Enlightenment can now be regarded rather as a complicated, sometimes contradictory, set of debates deriving from a far wider social milieu than earlier accounts had allowed. As Outram argues, ‘Enlightenment’ as a term is not rendered meaningless, but can refer to a ‘series of problems or debates’ which do appear to be characteristic of ‘the way in which ideas, opinions and social and political structures interacted and changed in the eighteenth century’.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, recent studies have highlighted that Enlightenment ideas cannot be separated from their ‘social and discursive practices and institutions’.<sup>7</sup> The social world of the Enlightenment was located within the public sphere.

Although never intended by the German sociologist to apply particularly to France, the Habermasian ‘bourgeois public sphere’ has nevertheless provided a focus

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough treatment of Rousseau and Tissot and their significance for subsequent discussions of exercise, see below, Chapter Two.

<sup>5</sup> D. Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995). See also R. Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994); C. Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: French Women and the Problem of Modernity* (Princeton, 2001); T. Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 1721-1794* (London, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Outram, *The Enlightenment*, p. 12.



for the majority of recent discussions on eighteenth-century cultural and political change.<sup>8</sup> Despite its limitations, this theory provides a framework for understanding the mechanisms by which a spirit of reform could gain potency in eighteenth-century French society. According to this model, a literary public, aided by increased literacy rates and the expansion of print culture, emerged during the course of the eighteenth century from the 'intimate sphere of the conjugal family', into the world of the salon.<sup>9</sup> Here, the ideas contained in print could be discussed outside the official vehicles of the State. Unlike the hierarchical society of orders which characterised the *Ancien Régime*, the new public sphere was structured horizontally. Print culture rested upon the free circulation of information, 'grounded in human sociability and exchange'.<sup>10</sup> This alternative ordering of society, based upon 'wealth and taste, not birth or privilege', served to de-stabilise existing societal structures.<sup>11</sup>

Although the application of the term 'bourgeois public sphere' to eighteenth-century France has been largely dependent upon establishing the similarities between French and English economic development in this period, cultural and political historians have nevertheless tended to utilise what Colin Jones has referred to as a 'de-economized' version of Habermasian theory.<sup>12</sup> Here, studies have tended to focus exclusively upon the discursive practices which constituted public opinion.

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<sup>7</sup> Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Eng. Trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1989). For a discussion of accounts of the public sphere in France, see K. M. Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas', in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (London, 1992), pp. 181-211.

<sup>9</sup> Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere', p. 184.

<sup>10</sup> C. Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying': Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution', *The American Historical Review* vol. 101 (1996), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.



Nevertheless, the literary public sphere was reliant upon the commercialisation of culture in what was becoming a capitalist society. Private individuals could only become a reading public through the development of communication systems within a market society. In addition, the world of print could only be sustainable if it was supported by a new class of people who made a living out of the 'production of culture as a commodity'.<sup>13</sup>

The Habermasian emphasis upon the production of culture within the growth of commercial capitalism illuminates a public sphere comprised largely of the middling sort. More recent work, which highlights the importance of the consumption of the Enlightenment and the active role of the consumer, reveals a literary public consisting of a widening group of well-to-do people taken from all three Estates, albeit one that was dominated by members of the Third Estate. Keith Michael Baker has pointed to 'a growing skepticism regarding the utility of the notion of the bourgeoisie as a category to illuminate eighteenth-century French social and political life'.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the expression 'bourgeois' did not necessarily refer exclusively to the Third Estate. The term was polarised against the royal court in eighteenth-century political debates. The 'bourgeois' public sphere rendered its members clearly distinguishable both from the official representatives of the State and from the people, who were necessarily excluded from printed word debates.

Enlightenment reform was both self-conscious and self-reflexive. Contemporary writers referred to a spirit of change and to an explosion which had

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 16. See also, Jennifer M. Jones, 'Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Régime France', *French Historical Studies* 18 (1994), pp. 939-67 and Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere'.

<sup>13</sup> Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere', p. 185.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

taken place in print culture. They also commented on the increased importance placed upon health preservation and education amongst *les gens éclairés*. There was a fast growing literature available on health. Medical matters were also ubiquitous in the newspapers of late *Ancien Régime* France.<sup>15</sup> Medical information was prevalent not just in the specialist press, but also in the general journals and newspapers. Knowledge of disease and, more crucially here, the preservation of health, was viewed as important and useful information to be circulated as widely as possible.

However, the printing world did not simply facilitate an increased interest in health and medical matters. It also effected a shift in the social context in which medicine was practised. A new medical market-place evolved, which allowed the various facets of the medical world to compete in the same arena for their clients. The world of print enabled the seller of medical information (whether a Paris trained physician or a provincial dealer of herbal remedies) to reach the same wider audience. As members of the ‘corporate’ and ‘non-corporate’ medical community competed for existing and potential customers, public taste became ever more important in deciding the success of any medical enterprise.<sup>16</sup> Traditional hierarchies were challenged as new medical careers based upon commercial publishing were carved out.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the physician also utilised the expanding print market to further develop his social position. Thus, print served to support traditional medical authority as well as to challenge it.

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<sup>15</sup> See Jones, ‘The Great Chain of Buying’ and L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997), Chapter Ten.

<sup>16</sup> Brockliss and Jones have coined the phrases ‘corporate’ and ‘non-corporate’ medical communities in order to distinguish between different types of medical practitioners without falling back on the terms ‘professional’ and ‘popular’ which, as we have explored in the Introduction, do not do justice to the complex world of eighteenth-century medicine. See Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, Chapter Eight.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## A Revolution in Health Literature

In 1785, Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), physician and journalist, writing in the *Gazette de Santé* (1773-1789) which he had edited since the previous year, surveyed the state of physical education in France over the previous few decades. A 'revolution', he claimed, had taken place – a revolution for which he held two men responsible - 'Deux autorités si imposantes n'ont pas manqué de faire une impression générale, d'introduire l'usage des bains froids pour l'enfance, parmi les gens éclairés'.<sup>18</sup> The two figures in question were the Swiss physician, Samuel Auguste Tissot and the Genevan philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It was, Pinel held, the publication of two texts by these authors which had achieved this startling effect, reflecting a more general shift in thinking and writing about health, education and exercise in the latter decades of the *Ancien Régime*. Pinel judged Tissot's health manual, *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé*, published in 1761, and Rousseau's pedagogical treatise, *Émile; ou de l'Éducation*, published the following year, to be 'in the hands of all the world'.<sup>19</sup>

Pinel associated both Rousseau and Tissot with a movement for health reform. The writers themselves understood each other's work within this context and the correspondence between them highlights their mutual admiration.<sup>20</sup> However, the writings of Rousseau and Tissot were informed by existing medical literature.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Hygiène', *Gazette de Santé*, contenant, les nouvelles découvertes sur les moyens de se bien porter et de guérir quand on est malade, 1787, no. 25, pp. 97-98. Pinel's comment on the recent revolution in education was placed within an article on how to deal with the effects of the cold weather. According to Pinel, the only way to withstand the cold was to walk in the open air, with one's head uncovered, as opposed to staying in hot apartments, which had been the traditional method of combatting the cold. He argued that a recent revolution in education had aided this process, and now even the youngest mother was more enlightened in matters of health preservation. 'Médecine', *Journal de Paris*, Sunday 30 October 1785, pp. 1249-50.

<sup>19</sup> 'Hygiène', *Gazette de Santé*, 1787, no. 25, pp. 97-98.



For example, their debates on the dangers of swaddling were contributions to theories which had been current throughout the 1750s.<sup>21</sup> It was rather the styles in which they wrote and the scale of the audience that they managed to reach which rendered their work so important. In this context, they can be viewed as popularisers of a new medical and pedagogical discourse which had broken away from traditional health and educational literature during the preceding decade.

The work of Tissot and Rousseau provoked an immediate response from the medical community. They became the most frequently cited modern authors in subsequent discussions of health. Between them they transformed the nature and scale of the potential audience for health advice. Whereas, as we shall see, seventeenth-century health literature drew from a charitable tradition aimed at helping the rural poor, *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile* encouraged a new target audience for health advice – the urban elite.

Both texts were best sellers. Tissot, whilst clearly not as famous as Rousseau, was an extremely well known medical figure in late eighteenth-century France.<sup>22</sup> The publishing success of his *Avis au Peuple* was unprecedented, and the text can be viewed as a prototype for the new style of health manual emergent in the

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<sup>20</sup> See for example, volume XI, letter 1966 and volume XII, letter 2022, in R. A. Leigh (ed.), *Correspondance complète de Jean Jacques Rousseau* (Geneva, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> Jean Bloch, in her discussion of Rousseau, refers to the swaddling debate of the 1750s and the issues surrounding maternal breastfeeding. She contends that while Rousseau is not proposing anything new in this area, the force and manner with which he argues the case brings about a change in cultural practice. See J. H. Bloch, 'Rousseau's Reputation as an Authority on Childcare and Physical Education in France before the Revolution', *Pedagogica Historica* (1974), pp. 5-33. In addition, Carlos Bartissol has traced the influence of the physician Jean-Charles Desessartz's *Traité sur l'éducation corporelle des enfants en bas âge* (1760) on Rousseau's medical ideas. See C. Bartissol, *Source des idées médicales de Rousseau I. Des-essartz et Rousseau* (Paris, 1914).

<sup>22</sup> For recent work on Tissot, see L. J. Jordanova, 'The Popularization of Medicine: Tissot on Onanism', *Textual Practice*, 1 (1987), pp. 68-79; A. Emch-Dériaz, *Tissot: Physician of the Enlightenment* (New York, 1992); Anne C. Vila, 'Enlightened Minds and Scholarly Bodies from Tissot to Sade', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, vol. 23 (1994), pp. 207-20. The catalogue of

1760s.<sup>23</sup> It was sold to a European-wide urban audience. Between its publication in 1761, and Pinel's commentary on it in 1787, *Avis au Peuple* had been translated into thirteen languages, with twenty-eight editions published in French.<sup>24</sup> In all, there were around 30,000 copies of *Avis au Peuple* produced for the French-speaking world.

Rousseau's *Émile* had a similarly remarkable effect on the reading public of Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Between 1762 and 1790, twenty-seven known editions were published. Nineteen of those appeared before 1770.<sup>25</sup> The influence of Rousseau's writing was immense. His focus upon moral degeneration and the healthiness of the natural man struck a chord with the reading public. The need for regeneration was a recurrent theme in the second half of the eighteenth century and, as François Furet argues, no one encapsulated the corruption of modern man in the *Ancien Régime* more effectively than Rousseau.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the philosopher knew the importance of winning public opinion and did so, both through his writing style and through his cultivation of the fascination which grew up

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the complete correspondence of Tissot is in the process of being computerised by the *Institut Romand d'Histoire de la Médecine* in Lausanne.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew Ramsey cites Tissot's *Avis au Peuple* and William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* as the most popular Enlightenment self-help medical handbooks. See W. Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; or the Family Physician* (Edinburgh, 1769), and M. Ramsey, 'The Popularization of Medicine in France, 1650-1900', in R. Porter (ed.), *The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850* (London, 1992), pp. 97-133.

<sup>24</sup> There were only actually six official editions of the work, but different publishers printed different impressions. *Avis au Peuple* was translated into German, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, English, Swedish, Danish, Hungarian, Spanish, Greek, Russian, Polish and Portuguese. See *A L'Ombre des Lumières: Un médecin lausannois et ses patients – Auguste Tissot 1728-1797* (Lausanne, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, 1997). In a footnote, Darnton refers to work in progress being carried out by the Voltaire Foundation in Oxford under the direction of Jo-Anne McEachern. The work, yet to be published, is the *Bibliography of the Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau to 1800*. She has identified nineteen editions of *Émile* published between 1762 and 1770 and eight editions for 1770-90 (six by the same publisher). Darnton argues that the demand for *Émile* eventually declined because the market became saturated. The fact that *Émile* was immediately banned for its section on natural religion did not appear to affect its circulation or its popularity.



around his public persona.<sup>27</sup> As Robert Darnton has persuasively demonstrated, the appeal to sentiment was so strong in works such as *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, that Rousseau literally transformed readers' lives.<sup>28</sup>

Although his obsession with his own health, his contempt for the medical profession and his ardent views on breastfeeding have been well documented, Rousseau is not generally associated with influencing health literature or medical practice.<sup>29</sup> Yet, Rousseau's pedagogical thought centred upon physical education, or the general development of the child's body. Accordingly, bodily health or 'fitness' formed an integral part of *Émile*. The importance which Rousseau placed upon healthiness in this text proved extremely influential and had crucial consequences for the expanding health market. Whilst he attacked the leisured classes for their obsession with health preservation and the medical profession for its manipulation of that obsession, he simultaneously encouraged it by highlighting the 'virtue' of health. As we will see, health and strength were central to Rousseau's concept of virtue and subsequent health manuals were to contribute to a definition of health based upon moral worth.

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<sup>26</sup> F. Furet, 'Rousseau and the French Revolution', in C. Orwin and N. Tarcov (eds.), *The Legacy of Rousseau* (Chicago, 1997), pp. 168-82.

<sup>27</sup> Both Nicole Fermon and Mark Hulliung have argued that Rousseau's writing style was in part shaped by the critical role which he attributed to public opinion. According to Blum, the public persona of *Jean-Jacques*, which Rousseau cultivated in his writing, became a fashion amongst his readers. Darnton also refers to the importance of Rousseau's personality to an understanding of his popularity. See C. Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1986), p. 13; R. Darnton, 'Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity', in *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1985), pp. 215-56; N. Fermon, 'Domesticating Women, Civilizing Men: Rousseau's Political Program', *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 35, n. 3, (1994), pp. 431-42; M. Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

<sup>28</sup> Darnton, 'Readers Respond to Rousseau'.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Bloch, 'Rousseau's Reputation as an Authority on Childcare and Physical Education' and J. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, Eng. Trans. (Chicago, 1988), 'On Rousseau's Illness', pp. 365-77.



Rousseau and Tissot set the agenda for subsequent health literature through their version of ‘natural’ healthcare which was predicated on the belief in the essential healthiness of a rural existence as opposed to the unhealthiness of urban life and of its wealthy inhabitants, contaminated by the luxury of modern living. Although their views on the role of the physician in society differed (Rousseau was scathing about the entire medical profession, whilst Tissot championed the potential of the enlightened physician to cure or prevent disease), *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile* both served to raise the status of health as a topic of interest for an urban reading public.

### **Tradition and Innovation in Health Literature**

Rousseau’s *Émile* and Tissot’s *Avis au Peuple* were responded to in different ways. Although incredibly influential, their ideas on health did not go unchallenged, either by medical writers or lay-readers. For example, Rousseau and Tissot had done much to encourage the use of cold baths in infancy. However, questions had been raised over the success of this type of bathing, and Pinel himself was concerned that cold water was too harsh a method for the strengthening of young children. A member of the public, writing to Pinel at the *Journal de Paris* in 1787 to claim that he had himself suffered from the misuse of this practice, encapsulated his feelings about Rousseau’s educational objectives: ‘L’enfance doit à l’immortel Rousseau d’avoir anéanti les liens du maillot et les entraves des corps; mais il ne faut pas pour cela adopter, sans discernement, tout ce qui prescrit ce bienfaiteur de premier âge’.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Médecine’, *Journal de Paris*, Saturday 4 August 1787, pp. 949-50.

Thus, models of the body proposed by Rousseau and Tissot were not adopted uncritically by consumers of health literature. Similarly, although *Émile* and *Avis au Peuple* marked a significant shift in conceptions of health and exercise, literature published after 1762 did not represent a complete break with past traditions. The increased appetite for health literature was filled by a combination of new and old texts. For example, there was a renewed interest in the famous poem on hygiene entitled *Regimen Santatis Salerni* which dated from the Salerno Medical School of the twelfth century. A translation of the poem was republished in 1779 under the title *L'art de conserver la santé*, and had also appeared in full in the *Gazette de Santé* the previous year.<sup>31</sup>

The co-existence of traditional and reformed models of hygiene is witnessed in the *Encyclopédie*, the publication of which spanned the decades before and after the appearance of *Émile* and *Avis au Peuple*. The *Encyclopédie*, which engrossed prominent *philosophes* following its conception in 1745, aimed to produce socially useful knowledge. Matters of health and medicine featured highly in this extraordinary publishing venture. Edited by Diderot and D'Alembert, with around 70,000 articles penned by one hundred and fifty known authors and a host of anonymous contributors, the seventeen volumes of text and eleven volumes of plates appeared between 1751 and 1777. As we shall explore in Chapter Three, the *Encyclopédie* articles concerned with health and exercise offered Classical explanations of the body, alongside those which were clearly informed by

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<sup>31</sup> See *L'Ecole de Salerne, ou l'art de conserver la santé, en vers latins et françois; avec des remarques, recueillie, augmentée et publiée par M. le Vacher de la Feutrie* (Mont-Cassin, 1779) and *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 9 July 1778, p. 114. For a history of the Salerno poem, see P. Willet Cummins, *A Critical Edition of Le regime tres utile et tres proufitable pour conserver et garder la santé du corps humain* (North Carolina, 1976), 'Introduction'.

contemporary concerns such as the damaging effects of luxury upon physical strength.

### The Health Manuals

In 1762, Armand Pierre Jacquin (1721-1780), Chaplain of Amiens Cathedral and health writer, identified a gap in the print market. In his introduction to *De la Santé: ouvrage utile à tout le monde*, he argued that the face of French literature had been changed by ‘les ouvrages utiles’ in the decade prior to his publication. However, although there had been numerous ‘useful’ books published upon agriculture, commerce and the economy, one subject area had been neglected: namely health. Only five books had been published on the subject in the previous ten years and three of those had been translations of English works which, according to Jacquin, compromised their relevance to a specifically French audience. Of the remaining two books, one was a specialist text dealing solely with the health of sailors. The other - Tissot’s *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* – although to be commended, was more concerned with curing illness than with conserving health: ‘Il en est de même d’un Ouvrage tout nouveau, et dont nous sommes redevables autant à l’humanité qu’aux connoissances de M. Tissot: *L’Art de conserver la santé* de ce savant Médecin, auroit bien mieux figuré sous le titre de *l’art de réparer la santé*’.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Pierre Armand Jacquin, *De la Santé: ouvrage utile à tout le monde* (Paris, 1762), *avertissement*. The health books to which Jacquin referred were: a translation by a Monsieur L. de Préville of *La Méthode aisée pour conserver sa santé* (1752), Cheyne’s *L’Art de conserver la santé des personnes valétudinaires* (1755), Mackenzie’s *Histoire de la Santé* (1761) and M. Duhamel du Monceau, *Moyens de conserver la santé aux équipages des vaisseaux* (1759). J. B. Duplanil (1740-1802) the translator of Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* also criticised Tissot’s work for not discussing the rules of hygiene. See Ramsey, ‘The Popularization of Medicine in France’.



Jacquin viewed his work as one that answered a need for practical advice on the conservation of health that had not yet been adequately filled.

The new self-help health literature which was published from the 1760s demonstrated discernible differences in format, structure and style as well as content from earlier forms of health advice. Manuals published from the second half of the eighteenth century included, for the first time, alphabetical indexing and a thematic contents page.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the information contained in manuals could be accessed more readily and the reader could reference the text in more than one way. The importance of the ease of locating the desired information contained in the text was matched by the emphasis placed upon the clarity of the information itself. In a review of *Domestic Medicine*, translated by the Montpellier physician Jean-Denis Duplanil (1740-1802), the *Gazette de Santé* criticised its author - the Scottish physician William Buchan (1729-1805) - for his use of 'le jargon scientifique'. It claimed that this was a general tendency amongst physicians and argued against the practice, 'qui déroboit à des personnes éclairées et judicieuses, la facilité de connoître leur existence physique, et de l'assurer par l'usage des moyens capables d'entretenir ou de rétablir leur santé'.<sup>34</sup>

The demand for lucid information which could be easily understood by an educated lay-reader need not be viewed as part of a popularizing agenda.<sup>35</sup> Rather, it can be situated within a wider call for transparency within Enlightenment reform. Knowledge, it was held, was not to be cloaked in a language that could only be understood by a minority. All useful information should be exchanged freely within

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<sup>33</sup> R. Rey, 'La Vulgarisation médicale au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle: le cas des dictionnaires portatifs de santé', *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences*, 44 (1991), pp. 413-33.

<sup>34</sup> 'Livres nouveaux', *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 20 July 1775, p. 115.

the public sphere. The physician Jean-Charles Desessartz (1729-1811), who would later become Dean of the *Faculté de Médecine* of Paris, spoke of the need to be useful in his *Traité de l'Éducation Corporelle des Enfants*, published in 1760. Here, he stressed the importance of using inclusive language in medical writing: 'Comme ces préceptes sont pour tous les états, afin de nous mettre à la portée de tout le monde, nous avons, autant qu'il nous a été possible, évité les expressions sçavantes, et qui ne sont gueres connues que des gens de l'Art.'<sup>36</sup> Roselyne Rey has noted, that while health writers were keen to distinguish themselves from the 'secret-keeping' charlatan, they did not wish to render their knowledge entirely accessible to the lay-reader.<sup>37</sup> Although Matthew Ramsey has identified a genuine popularizing urge in this period, as we shall explore further in Chapter Three, transparency of information was never achieved at the expense of the physician's authority over medical knowledge.

How was the physician's influence negotiated in these texts? The testimony of the author became increasingly important in the new-style health manuals. Earlier forms of advice had tended to be multi-authored collections of information taken from traditional charitable works. In new works, the author's particular experience was utilised to add both authority and authenticity to the health advice given. For example, Jean-Baptiste Pressavin (1735-1812), a Paris-trained surgeon from Lyon, discussed the benefits of exercise to the person consumed by fatigue in his *L'Art de Prolonger la Vie et de Conserver la Santé* (1786). Pressavin used his own experience to argue that the action of the body actually restored energy to it: 'J'ai fait

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<sup>35</sup> See above, 'Introduction', Section 'Positioning Exercise within the 'New Medical History'.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Charles Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation corporelle des enfans* (Paris, 1760) p. xxxi.

<sup>37</sup> Rey, 'La Vulgarisation médicale'.

cent fois cette épreuve sur moi-même'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the author of the reformed health manual seized a more central place within the text.

### The Periodicals

The Parisian physician and pamphleteer Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg (1709-1779), the editor of the short-running *Gazette de Médecine*, referred in 1762 to a 'gazetteomanie' which had spread throughout Western Europe and to the East.<sup>39</sup> In eighteenth-century France, the number of periodicals that entered the market increased steadily. According to Jean Sgard's research, one hundred new titles appeared between 1750 and 1760, increasing to one hundred and forty-eight titles between 1770 and 1780. Similarly, Jack Censer's statistics, which incorporate periodicals published in France or for a French audience which lasted for at least three years, show an increase from fifteen periodicals published in 1745 to eighty-two in 1785.<sup>40</sup>

Periodicals offered a more interactive medium than the manual for the discussion of ideas about health and exercise. The opinion of the reader was actively sought through the encouragement of correspondence between subscribers and editors. Thus, the specialist and general press offered opportunities for public debate and the exchange of new ideas about health in addition to the more prescriptive advice of the manual. Specific debates on hygiene and exercise featured highly from the 1760s to the 1780s.

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<sup>38</sup> Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger la vie et de conserver la santé* (Lyon, 1786), p. 159.

<sup>39</sup> 'Prospectus', *Gazette de Médecine*, 1762, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> See Sgard in H. J. Martin and R. Chartier (eds.), *Histoire de l'édition française: le livre triomphant 1660-1830* (Paris, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 200-5 and Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1994), p. 7.



In his study of the periodical press in eighteenth-century France, Censer divides the periodicals on the market into three broad sections: political, literary-philosophical and the advertising papers known as the *Affiches*. It is from the latter two that new conceptions of health and exercise emerge. The literary-philosophical press provided discussion of a ‘panoply of questions from science to literature’.<sup>41</sup> As Censer points out, knowledge in eighteenth-century France was not compartmentalised into separate fields of enquiry in the manner of modern information. Although there were ‘specialist’ periodicals within the literary-philosophical press which dealt with matters of health and medicine, their range was broad in scope. Medical periodicals such as the *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie* (1754-1793), *Gazette de Médecine* (1761-1763) and *Gazette de Santé* (1773-1789) paid particular attention to matters of health preservation. They offered their readers information on a range of topics, from techniques to revive the drowned, through advertisements for the latest health manual, to the review of educational establishments which privileged the reform of the body.<sup>42</sup>

The general press also thoroughly engaged with matters of health and medicine. Literary-philosophical periodicals spread the message contained in health manuals because they tended to review them. The *Journal de Trévoux* (1701-1767), the *Année Littéraire* (1754-1791) and the *Journal Encyclopédique* (1756-1794) all contained reviews of the prominent texts. Although they did provide a critique of them, this tended to be secondary to the business of summarising the content of these

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<sup>41</sup> Censer, *The French Press*, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, the *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie* (Paris), the review of Pia’s work on resuscitation, July 1777, pp. 89-90, an advert for Roussel’s *Système physique et morale de la femme*, December 1775, p. 475, and a review of Verdier’s *Cours d’Éducation*, April 1778, pp. 289-303.

manuals. Thus, the key message of a manual such as Pressavin's *L'Art de Prolonger la Vie et de Conserver la Santé* appeared in print separately to the text itself.

The *Affiches* emerged in the 1750s to house the advertisements formerly found in the *Gazettes*. The provincial and Parisian *Affiches* published a wide range of commercial information. They also contained a broad spread of general interest items ranging from commentaries on moral questions to announcements on forthcoming events of intellectual interest.<sup>43</sup> In this way, the *Affiches* were far more than simply a vehicle for the advertisement of (in this case) health-related products. As Colin Jones has demonstrated, the *Affiches* 'overlooked their profit-orientated organisation to conceive of themselves playing an altruistic role in the diffusion of Enlightened ideas and in the infusion of opinion with Enlightenment values'.<sup>44</sup> Despite the fact that political matters were beyond their official remit, attacks on the degenerative effects of luxury and idleness, a commitment to the necessity of work and an upholding of 'natural' ideals emerged from the pages of the *Affiches*.<sup>45</sup> For example, the Paris *Affiches* included information and debates on projects pertaining to public utility and to the improved health and education of the citizen.<sup>46</sup>

The Enlightened stance of the *Affiches* can also be regarded as typical of the literary-philosophical periodicals which have been examined here. The periodical press disseminated health information to a broad audience. Circulation of literature concerning health and physical fitness was further facilitated by the printing of identical information in separate journals, thus ensuring the widest possible audience.

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<sup>43</sup> See Censer, *The French Press*, 'The Affiches', pp. 54-86 and Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying'.

<sup>44</sup> C. Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying', p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> These are themes that Censer identifies from a sample of the *Affiches* taken from the second half of eighteenth century. See Censer, *The French Press*, pp. 65-75.

<sup>46</sup> See below, Chapters Five and Seven.

As we have seen, when Pinel took over editorial leadership at the *Gazette de Santé* in 1784, he penned several articles on hygiene, or the conservation of health. As well as publishing his observations in his own *Gazette*, Pinel also had them printed in the form of letters in the *Journal de Paris*. At the end of his first letter to the Journal, Pinel introduced the idea that his discussions on hygiene could become a regular feature:

Si ces observations peuvent intéresser, je vous prie de les rendre publiques. Je puis vous en communiquer un grand nombre d'autres sur le même objet, c'est-à-dire, sur l'hygiène, qui est une des parties de la Médecine des plus intéressantes et des moins connues.<sup>47</sup>

Pinel's main focus was the practical application of the non-naturals.<sup>48</sup> Drawing on Classical ideals, Pinel designed a *natural* model of health care, which concentrated upon exercise, fresh air and exposure to the elements. Medical gymnastics were particularly important for Pinel and he planned to publish a work specifically on exercise for health in relation to differences in age, sex, temperament and climate: 'Peu de sujets en médecine me paroissent aussi féconds en applications utiles, aussi propres à être appuyés par des faits bien constatés, et aussi appropriés à nos mœurs actuelles'.<sup>49</sup> By his third letter to the *Journal de Paris*, Pinel's letters had become a regular feature, and he simply signed them with his initial. The editor of the *Journal* said of Pinel, 'Il rédige actuellement la Gazette de Santé avec beaucoup

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<sup>47</sup> *Journal de Paris*, Sunday 30 October 1785, p. 1150.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of this term see below, Chapter Three, Section 'Introduction'.

<sup>49</sup> 'Hygiene', *Gazette de Santé*, n. 5, 1786. Pinel had also mentioned his proposed book on exercise two years earlier. See, 'Hygiene', *Gazette de Santé*, n. 36, 1784, pp. 141-42.



de lumières, de zèle et de talent.’<sup>50</sup> Thus, a cross-referencing between different types of journals also ensured the widest possible audience for health advice.

### The Learned Societies

Enlightened views of health were not only circulated in print. They were also discussed in public spaces, from the informal gatherings of the *salon*, coffee-shop and *musée*, to the more formal institutions of the State-endorsed provincial and national Academies. Of particular interest here are the *Académie Royale des Sciences* (1699-1793), *Académie Royale de Chirurgie* (1731-1793) and the *Société Royale de Médecine* (1776-1793), which asserted their authority over the public’s health.<sup>51</sup>

The French Academies were established by Royal Charter. They could be consulted directly by any ministers or secretaries of State whose responsibilities related to their area of expertise. The structure of Academies was ‘monarchical, hierarchical, prescriptive, and privileged’.<sup>52</sup> Their interaction with the educated public and members of the medical, surgical and scientific communities took place through public meetings, prize essay competitions and correspondence. For example, the *Académie Royale de Chirurgie* offered annual prizes from 1732, just

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<sup>50</sup> ‘Médecine’, *Journal de Paris*, Tuesday 22 May 1787, p. 614.

<sup>51</sup> For discussions of provincial and national Academies, see D. T. Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine: Paris surgeons and medical science and institutions in the eighteenth century* (Westport, 1980); C. C. Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France at the end of the Old Regime* (Princeton, 1980); R. Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Académie des Sciences 1666-1803* (Berkeley, 1971); C. Hannaway, ‘Medicine, Public Welfare and the State in Eighteenth-Century France: The Société Royale de Médecine de Paris (1776-1793)’, Ph.D. diss., John Hopkins Univ., 1974; D. Roche, *Le siècle des lumières en province: académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680-1789* (Paris, 1978).

<sup>52</sup> Gillispie, *Science and Polity*, p. 81.

one year after its establishment.<sup>53</sup> The *Société Royale de Médecine*, although not an Academy, modelled itself upon such bodies, notably the *Académie Royale des Sciences* which had been established in 1699.<sup>54</sup> Through these means, the *Société*, given its charter in 1778, claimed its position as the public's guide on matters of health. The *Société*, patronised by the Court, interacted with the State on questions of public health, the administration of mineral waters, military and naval medicine and agricultural matters. At meetings held twice weekly, the Society sat in judgement on medical books, remedies and innovations.

The influence and profile of these institutions was raised both through their own publications of proceedings and through the announcement of their news in cheaper and more widely read periodicals. For example, the publication of the annual *Histoire et Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* suffered delays of up to three years. The *Journal de Paris*, edited by Cadet de Vaux, the brother of an academician, printed scientific news prior to the official publication by the *Académie*.<sup>55</sup> In the general press, the *Académie Royale des Sciences* and the *Société Royale de Médecine* in particular, were presented as high-profile and expert bodies which were to be consulted on any matter pertaining to public health or urban improvement.

The growing importance placed upon the role of exercise in improving the health and strength of the nation can be measured by the number of prizes which were offered on the subject of exercise by such national and provincial institutions. The *Société Royale de Médecine* held a competition on the subject of the physical

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<sup>53</sup> Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, p. 580.

<sup>54</sup> Gillispie, *Science and Polity*, p. 194 and Jones and Brockliss *The Medical World*, 'The Royal Society of Medicine and the Struggle for Medical Authority', pp. 758-69.

education of children in 1783,<sup>56</sup> while the *Académie Royale de Chirurgie* offered a series of prizes in the 1770s for essays on the influence of the non-naturals on surgical illnesses, in which movement and rest played a critical role.<sup>57</sup> The *Académie* at Dijon awarded first prize in 1775 to a dissertation entitled, ‘Quels sont les avantages que les mœurs ont retiré des exercices et des jeux publics chez differens peuples, et dans les différens tems où ils ont été en usage?’.<sup>58</sup> In this way, the importance of physical exercise was demonstrated to an extremely wide audience.

### The Health Writers

Who were the individuals responsible for penning such copious quantities of health advice? A quantitative analysis of the biography of health writers has not formed part of this research project. Nevertheless, a picture of the typical health writer does emerge. Health manual authors and medical journalists came from broadly similar educational backgrounds. Indeed, their roles often overlapped.<sup>59</sup>

Authors of the new hygiene were exclusively male.<sup>60</sup> Women did write on education and physical education but they did not publish specifically on hygiene. This was probably due largely to the fact that the reformed health writing tended to be the domain of the medical professions, from which women were excluded. There

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<sup>55</sup> Gillispie, *Science and Polity*, p. 98.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Quels sont en France les abus à réformer dans l’éducation physique, et quel est le régime le plus propre à fortifier le tempérament et à prévenir les maladies des enfans, eu égard aux usages et aux différences températures?’, *Histoire de La Société Royale de Médecine, avec les mémoires de médecine et de physique médicale pour les mêmes années* (Paris, 1787). This publication offered edited ‘highlights’ of the history of the *Société Royale de Médecine* for the years 1782-83. This particular prize was announced at the public meeting of 11 March 1783.

<sup>57</sup> *Mémoires sur les sujets proposés pour les prix de l’Académie Royale de Chirurgie. Nouvelle édition avec notes* (Paris, 1819).

<sup>58</sup> See the *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 30 March 1775.

<sup>59</sup> Rey, ‘La Vulgarisation médicale’.

<sup>60</sup> I have found no reference to female health writers during this period.



were exceptions to the medical dominance of the health writers. As we have seen, Jacquin, author of *De la Santé: Ouvrage utile à tout le monde* published in 1762, was chaplain of Amiens Cathedral. However, the great majority of health writers were either physicians or educated surgeons, who had been trained at the respected medical centres of Paris and Montpellier.<sup>61</sup>

Oversight of the health care of people's bodies, by French law, was the strict monopoly of the medical profession and the branches of the profession were only entitled to practice in specific places, assigned on the basis of the practitioner's course of study, the degree he had obtained and his membership in a corporation or guild. The country was split into three types of area; towns with faculties, colleges and corporations, towns without these facilities, and rural areas. Only top physicians and surgeons graduated from and practised in the big cities. Those men able to train at Paris and Montpellier tended to be of a certain social and financial standing. For example, a medical doctorate from the capital took between five and eight years to complete at an estimated cost of seven thousand *livres*.<sup>62</sup>

The differences in social status and aims and objectives of physicians and surgeons in the eighteenth century have been well investigated, and I do not mean to ignore the differences between the professions by grouping the medical authors together as one unit.<sup>63</sup> However, given the professional status of the surgeons who

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<sup>61</sup> Despite the fact that rules on the study and practice of medicine were uniform throughout the country, it was only really the courses at Montpellier and Paris that were highly respected in France. Montpellier graduates were particularly sought after in the second half of the eighteenth century. See L. W. B. Brockliss, *French Higher Education in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. A Cultural History* (Oxford, 1987), p. 398 and C. C. Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France at the end of the Old Regime* (Princeton, 1980), p. 218.

<sup>62</sup> J. P. Goubert, 'The Medicalization of French Society at the End of the Ancien Régime', trans. E. Forster, in L. G. Stevenson (ed.), *A Celebration of Medical History* (Baltimore, 1982).

<sup>63</sup> See Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine*, for a discussion of the differences between the surgical and medical professions.

published, the growing status of surgery in the capital, and the increased importance of surgical training for physicians, it is useful for this purpose to view the medical men within the same professional framework. For example, Clément-Joseph Tissot (1768-1826), a Paris-trained surgeon from Orans, also received a medical doctorate from Besançon in 1776.<sup>64</sup> There was an increase in the number of educated surgeons purchasing a second degree in medicine in the latter part of the eighteenth century. According to Gelfand, surgeons did not take a medical degree to change professions, but rather to enhance their prestige and income. The letters DM after their signature legally entitled them to charge patients for medical advice.<sup>65</sup> Clément Tissot made a name for himself early in his career through the successful essays he submitted in response to the prizes offered by the *Académie Royale de Chirurgie* on the effects of the non-naturals on surgical illnesses. Tissot published his *Gymnastique Médecinale et Chirurgicale, ou essai sur l'utilité du Mouvement, ou des différens Exercices du corps, et du repos dans la cure des Maladies* (1780), a version of his essay on movement and rest, when he was just thirty.<sup>66</sup> Such a precocious start to his professional life earned Tissot the nickname 'Monsieur Petit Tissot' (after his famous Swiss namesake), and a good deal of criticism from the medical journals, besides.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For biographical information on Tissot, see, *Biographisches Lexikon des Hervorragenden Ärzte aller Zeiten und Völker* (Berlin, 1934), vol. 5, p. 595.

<sup>65</sup> Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine*, pp. 151-2.

<sup>66</sup> C. J. Tissot, *Gymnastique médicale et chirurgicale, ou essai sur l'utilité du mouvement, ou des différens exercices du corps, et du repos dans la cure des maladies* (Paris, 1780). His other essays on the non-naturals were published much later. See *Effets du sommeil et de la veille dans le traitement des maladies externes* (Paris and Strasbourg, 1798), *De l'Influence des passions de l'âme dans les maladies, et des moyens d'en corriger les mauvais effets; précédé du tableau de l'homme moral considéré sous ses différens rapports* (Paris and Strasbourg, 1798), *Du régime diététique dans la cure des maladies* (Paris and Strasbourg, 1798).

<sup>67</sup> The review of *Gymnastique médicale* in the *Journal de Médecine* was rather critical of Tissot's work, and regarded it as a work of apprenticeship. Tissot was seen to be a young author with promise but lacking in maturity of approach. See, *Journal de Médecine*, October 1780, p. 469.



The motivation behind involvement in publishing must be central to an examination of health writers. As we have seen, the rapidly expanding print culture offered opportunities to succeed in the medical world outside the corporative medical community. Did health writers publish in order to make a name for themselves in the medical world or were they already practitioners who hoped to increase their number of patients through prestige and popularity? Was it simply a money-making enterprise, or did these men wish to help their intended audience? Did they believe that their opinions on health needed to reach a wider audience? Was publication an attempt at moral control?

The health writers can be contained within the same broad professional and social framework. They tended to be younger men, establishing a reputation and making a living either as a prelude, an accompaniment or an alternative to private practice. Setting up a practice was not straightforward for a young medical graduate. Although often drawn to Paris, provincial physicians were not automatically allowed to practise in the capital. They had first to establish contacts in order to gain clients in the Parisian medical scene. If a young doctor published, he potentially made a name for himself and, simultaneously, could earn enough money to live on until he was able to set up his own practice.<sup>68</sup> This perhaps explains Pinel's move into medical journalism.<sup>69</sup> As a graduate of Toulouse, Philippe Pinel was unable to practise medicine in the capital. In 1784, he assumed editorial leadership of the *Gazette de Santé*, which was published weekly from 1773 until 1789, when it was

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<sup>68</sup> In the case of books, unless an author was particularly famous, the publisher would pay a sum on receipt of the book, in exchange for all printing rights. See D. T. Pottinger, *The French Book Trade in the Ancien Régime 1500-1791* (Cambridge Mass., 1958).

<sup>69</sup> See P. Chabbert, 'Pinel', in C. C. Gillispie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (New York, 1974), pp. 611-14.



absorbed by the *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie et Pharmacie*. Pinel, a frequenter of Mme Helvétius' *salon* and prominent commentator on hygiene, tends to be remembered for his 'moral treatment' of the insane which he developed after being appointed to the position of *Médecin des Infirmeries* of the *Hospice de Bicêtre* in 1793.<sup>70</sup> His methods, which included the use of hydrotherapy and physical exercise for the patient, reflected his earlier preoccupation with preventive medicine.

It was important for any medical graduate to establish a reputation. The gaining of professional credibility was crucial to a successful career. Thus, health writing and medical journalism could be a means of self-advertisement. For example, manual writers tended to provide the reader with details of their career credentials. Self-advertisement ranged from Pierre Virard's 'Docteur en Médecine de l'Université de Montpellier', by way of introduction to his *Essai sur la Santé des Filles Nubiles* (1779), to the Parisian surgeon Pierre Fabre's (1716-1791) 'Maître en Chirurgie, ancien Prévot de sa Compagnie, Conseiller et Commissaire pour les Extraits de l'Académie Royale de Chirurgie, et Professeur Royal du Collège' on the title page of his *Recherches sur la Nature de l'homme, considéré dans l'État de Santé et dans l'État de Maladie* (1776).<sup>71</sup>

We have already seen that the identity of the author became more central to the new style of health manuals published in the second half of the century. Self-advertisement also suggests that it was of the utmost importance to assure the

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<sup>70</sup> Pinel is now considered to be one of the founders of psychiatry. His treatment is regarded to be marked by a gentleness and understanding. He was opposed to violent methods, such as chaining patients, and believed that the patient should be involved in a programme of meaningful work. Pinel was also regarded by contemporaries as a master of internal medicine through the publication of his *Nosographie Philosophique* (1798). For a biographical overview of Pinel see Ibid., and D. Weiner, *Comprendre et Soigner: Philippe Pinel, 1745-1826: la Médecine de l'esprit* (Paris, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> P. Virard, *Essai sur la santé des filles nubiles*, 2nd ed. (London, 1779) and P. Fabre, *Recherches sur la nature le l'homme, considéré dans l'état de santé et dans L'état de maladie* (Paris, 1776).

potential buyer of the book that the author was both knowledgeable and respectable. The need to distinguish oneself from the non-respectable is suggestive of both fierce competition and the desire to differentiate oneself from the non-professional medical men (the charlatans). The authors were at pains to stress that the information they were selling was both truthful and practical. Virard said in his introduction that, 'tout est traité dans cet Ouvrage selon les vrais principes médicaux: on y trouvera par-tout la vérité'.<sup>72</sup> Jean Astruc promised his readers that while other works on the health of women had concentrated on theory and neglected practice, his would differ. In his *Traité des Maladies des Femmes* (1761-65) he argued: 'je crois l'avoir fait quelque succès à l'égard de la Théorie; et je m'estimerois heureux si je pouvois me flatter d'avoir réussi de même pour la Pratique'.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the identity and respectability of the author was a key selling feature.

Not all health manuals were written overtly as vehicles of self-advertisement. Anselme-Louis-Bernard Bréchillet Jourdain (1734-1816) was a dentist and inventor of surgical instruments who had studied under Moreau, the surgical *chef* of *l'Hôtel-Dieu*, Paris. Although he published other works on dentistry under his own name, Jourdain's health manuals were issued anonymously.<sup>74</sup> However, as the following example suggests, within the publishing world at least, a text published anonymously did not necessarily secure the anonymity of the author. *Préceptes de Santé ou Introduction au Dictionnaire de Santé* (1772) has subsequently been accredited solely to Jourdain, whereas dual authorship with the Parisian physician and

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<sup>72</sup> Virard, *Essai sur de santé*, p. xii-xiii.

<sup>73</sup> J. Astruc, *Traité des maladies des femmes* (Paris, 1761-5), p. xix-xx.

<sup>74</sup> See for example, A. L. B. Jourdain, *Traité des dépôt dans le sinus maxillaire, des fractures, et des caries de l'une et l'autre mâchoire suivis de réflexions et d'observations sur toutes les opérations de l'art du dentiste* (Paris, 1760).

contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, Jean Goulin (1728-1799), has been given to Jourdain's other health texts, *Le Médecin des Dames ou L'Art de les Conserver en Santé* (1771) and *Le Médecin des Hommes, depuis la puberté jusqu'à l'Extrême Vieillesse* (1772). However, in a letter printed in the *Gazette de Santé* by Goulin, the physician denied responsibility for the two works which had been placed under his and Jourdain's name in the catalogue of publisher Méquignon. Of *Médecin des Hommes*, Goulin said: 'C'est la première fois que j'ai connoissance de cette production à laquelle je déclare n'avoir eu absolument aucune part. L'honneur de cette composition est dû tout entier à M. Jourdain, dentiste de Paris'. As for *Le Médecin des Dames*, Goulin commented that he had been occupied with a book of the same name at the request of the publisher Vincent in 1763, but had abandoned the project. Jourdain had later been charged with the completion of the manual and had come to Goulin for advice. However, it was Jourdain who finished the book: 'Puisque M. Jourdain a fait imprimer ces deux ouvrages, et qu'il a été payé de son travail, il ne devoit pas permettre qu'on lui en ravît le mérite et la gloire'.<sup>75</sup>

Goulin's declaration, printed in the *Gazette de Santé*, also highlights the close relationship between the health writer and the publisher. Emch-Dériaz has seen the partnership forged between author and publisher in this period as evidence of a democratizing process, in which the health ideas of the full-folio *Encyclopédie* were disseminated to a wider audience through the sale of octavo and duodecimo-sized manuals.<sup>76</sup> A more cynical view is put forward by Matthew Ramsey, who argues

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<sup>75</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, n. 27 (1784), p. 108.

<sup>76</sup> Emch-Dériaz, 'The Non-Naturals Made Easy' in *The Popularization of Medicine*, p. 139. Of course, the *Encyclopédie* itself was eventually published in octavo. See Darnton, 'The Business of the Enlightenment'.



that, ‘young and ambitious doctors, it was said, joined hands, with enterprising small publishers to make a reputation for the one, and profits for the other’.<sup>77</sup>

The health manuals were published to make money. They also provided a service, as there was obviously an insatiable appetite for natural hygiene advice. However, they spread a moralised theory of natural medicine which highlighted the authority of the true physician. The health writer, according to his own sales pitch, provided essential knowledge – such that only the true physician could impart - about the body and how to reform it.

### **The Audience for Health Literature**

Jack Censer, in his study of the eighteenth-century French press, suggests that the prospectuses which were used to announce a paper’s publication objectives, ‘implicitly or explicitly defined the hoped-for relationship between audience and publication’.<sup>78</sup> Censer has carried out a general survey of prospectuses in order to investigate the ways in which eighteenth-century journalists fashioned themselves and to ascertain the periodical’s target audience. To the periodical’s prospectus can be added the health manual’s *avertissement*, to gain a clear idea of the constructed audience for health advice.

According to Censer’s study, seventeenth-century periodicals tended to act simply as suppliers of desired information or as a vehicle by which to air subscribers’ concerns. The desire to be useful was ever-present in these earlier journals. In the eighteenth century, however, the journalist carved out a less servile and more authoritative position for himself, while allowing the reader a more prominent and

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<sup>77</sup> Ramsey, ‘The Popularization of Medicine’, p. 107.

critical role.<sup>79</sup> Later journalists became experts with whom the educated and critical reader could exchange views on any given topic. Barbeu-Dubourg was the editor of the *Gazette d'Épidaure, ou Recueil Hebdomadaire de Nouvelles de Médecine, avec des réflexions pour simplifier la théorie, et éclairer la pratique*, which ran from April 1761 until January 1763.<sup>80</sup> Changing its name to the less cumbersome *Gazette de Médecine*, Dubourg invited only serious readers to subscribe to the publication which was clearly designed for an educated lay audience: 'Au reste, notre but étant principalement de server l'humanité, nous serions plus flattés de mériter le suffrage d'un petit nombre d'hommes graves et sensés, que d'amuser des milliers de gens oisifs et frivoles'.<sup>81</sup>

The rhetoric of health information tended to be inclusive – Jacquin's health advice, aimed at 'tout le monde', was fairly typical. However, its content tended to expose a constructed audience composed of a wealthy urban elite. Jean-Jacques Gardane (born 1726), a Montpellier physician and the founder of the *Gazette de Santé*, set out the main areas of interest of the *Gazette* in a prospectus in 1773. Within a discussion of the importance of hygiene as a topic of journalistic enquiry, Gardane pointed to the high social status of a number of the *Gazette*'s subscribers:

Une partie de la médecine qui intéresse de près tous les hommes, je veux dire l'Hygiène, ou la connoissance de ce qu'il faut observer pour se maintenir en santé, ne peut nulle part mieux trouver sa place, que dans un écrit périodique qui en porte le titre. Un grand nombre de remarques

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<sup>78</sup> Censer, *The French Press*, p. 191.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 191-96.

<sup>80</sup> Publishing details of the *Gazette de Médecine* have been taken from J. Sgard, (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Journaux 1600-1789* (Paris, 1991), vol. 1, pp. 491-92.

<sup>81</sup> 'Prospectus' *Gazette de Médecine*, 1762, p. 4.

insérées sur cet objet ont fixé l'attention des personnes de tous les rangs, étrangères d'ailleurs à la profession de la Médecine, et nous comptons plusieurs Souscripteurs dans les conditions les plus élevées. Quel encouragement pour nous d'insister sur des vérités de fait dont rien d'égale l'importance et l'utilité immédiate!<sup>82</sup>

Health information offered ways for the urban elite to re-fashion themselves. Within this group, women were particularly targeted, not just to look after their own health, but as managers of their family's health. Virard stated in the introduction to his *Essai sur la Santé des Filles Nubiles* (1779) that:

Cet Essai ne peut être que très-utile à celles pour qui je le destine; les femmes en général qui n'auront pas passé quarante-cinq ans, ou qui seront encore réglées, pourront également s'y instruire les unes et les autres le liront toujours avec avantage.<sup>83</sup>

Women were not merely the intended audience for health literature. Their own health, as we shall see, also provided much of the focus for its content. In Chapter Four we will examine the significance of women as objects and consumers of health advice.

Actual readership cannot be reached through an examination of intended audience. The ideal reader cannot be taken as a signifier of the actual reader and even books with the most clearly defined target audience were not necessarily used in the 'correct' manner. As Chartier comments, in his study of popular culture: 'Cultural consumption, whether popular or not, is at the same time a form of production, which creates ways of using that cannot be limited to the intentions of

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<sup>82</sup> 'Prospectus' *Gazette de Santé*, 1773.



those who produce'.<sup>84</sup> However, this said, an expanding print culture can be taken as evidence of an increased readership.<sup>85</sup> Eighteenth-century France witnessed increased literacy rates for both men and women. Nevertheless, it is necessary to differentiate between different levels of reading skill. The ability to sign one's name (a skill on which most studies of literacy levels are based) does not indicate the competence to read. Furthermore, the capacity to read familiar texts intensively - such as Bible passages - did not equate with the ability to read previously unseen texts extensively. It has been argued that in eighteenth-century France there was an habitually reading elite of just 30-50,000.<sup>86</sup>

Using an albeit limited sample of subscribers, Censer argues that the purchasers of periodicals were predominantly nobles, upper clergy and well-off commoners.<sup>87</sup> He uses the high subscription prices of journals to buttress his claim for an audience constructed of elites. Censer concludes that as journalists produced literature for their paying customers, the leisured elite, the relevance of periodicals to a less well-to-do audience remained minimal. Thus, for Censer, the actual audience for periodicals by and large mirrored their intended audience. However, he does acknowledge that readership did extend beyond official subscription, through the circulation or recycling of paid-for journals.

Colin Jones, looking specifically at the provincial *Affiches*, argues for a far broader readership which centred upon the 'middling sort', but which nevertheless

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<sup>83</sup> Virard, *Essai sur la santé*, p. xii.

<sup>84</sup> R. Chartier, 'Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France' in S. L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin, 1984), p. 234.

<sup>85</sup> Censer, *The French Press*, p. 184.

<sup>86</sup> Martin and Chartier (eds.), *Histoire de l'Édition Française*, vol. 2, p. 391. For a general overview, see T. Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 1721-1794* (London, 2000).

<sup>87</sup> Censer, *The French Press*, p. 189.

embraced both the noble and the servant.<sup>88</sup> Local advertisers would have had a far wider readership than a specialist medical journal such as the *Gazette de Santé*. Yet, as we have seen, enlightened ideas of health also permeated the pages of general newspapers. The fact that entrepreneurs went on to earn money through developing in practice ideas about exercise which they had clearly picked up either from prescriptive literature or from the press, indicates that exercise information was accessible to (and utilised by) a wide social base, even if the leisure to pursue exercise was not.<sup>89</sup>

Broadly speaking, the audience for health advice was drawn from the social world of the public sphere. Given the prominence of health and medicine in Enlightenment culture, we can assume that the literature delineated here was read widely and enthusiastically. During the course of the eighteenth century, there was an increased audience who had access to, and participated in, debates on hygiene.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the social context for reformed models of hygiene, which were produced largely by medical men, during the second half of the century. Health was an important topic of debate within the public sphere. Information on how to acquire and preserve it was purchased by those with the leisure to follow an individualised régime. Reformed models of exercise were also utilised by those who made a living from health-related products. An Enlightenment preoccupation with physical well-being was encouraged both by a burgeoning print culture and by the development of arenas for the discussion of medical concerns. We have highlighted

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<sup>88</sup> Jones, 'The Great Chain of Buying'.

the particular importance of Rousseau and Tissot to the rise in interest in health amongst an urban reading public. The following chapter will explore further the significance of *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* and *Émile; ou de l'Éducation* and their influence upon subsequent discussions of the body.

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<sup>89</sup> See below, Chapter Seven.



## Chapter Two

### *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Auguste Tissot as Health Revolutionaries*

#### Introduction

The publishing success of Tissot's *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* (1761) and Rousseau's *Émile; ou de l'Éducation* (1762) owed much to the cultural climate of the public sphere. The extensive reading patterns which emerged with the expansion of the print market gave living authors the capacity to gain renown within society. The 'best-seller' of the eighteenth century affected its enlightened readership with an intensity hitherto unknown.<sup>1</sup> Since *Avis au Peuple* was read so widely, Tissot was able to swiftly gain a European-wide reputation as an enlightened physician. Moreover, Rousseau's notoriety, following his *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750) and *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), was such that *Émile* was eagerly awaited even before its publication. The immediate banning of this book by the Paris *Parlement* served only to augment the excitement that had greeted its release.<sup>2</sup>

The writings of Rousseau and Tissot were characteristic of the shared concerns of the public sphere. However, their influence was such that they also served to shape those same concerns. Contemporaries viewed them as contributing to a revolution in health practice.<sup>3</sup> *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile* were instrumental in developing new understandings of the healthy body. A reformed physical education,

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the build-up to the release of *Émile*, see M. Cranston, *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1754-1762* (London, 1991), Chapter Twelve 'Banishment'.

<sup>3</sup> See above, Chapter One, Section 'A Revolution in Health'.

promoted by both authors, was to play an authoritative role in subsequent health literature.

Tissot and Rousseau each took an established literary genre (Tissot, the health manual and Rousseau, the pedagogical treatise) and developed it to their own ends. Tissot drew on a charitable tradition of health advice. However, he transformed it, both through the assertion of his medical authority over the knowledge imparted and by the distance he placed between the physician (himself) and the unlicensed practitioner (the previous exponents of health advice). Rousseau took Lockean sensationalist ideas and developed his version of them in an educational novel; a literary genre that had already proved extremely popular with François de Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699). Influenced by both Locke and Fénelon, Rousseau went much further than both in the importance he placed upon the body to educational development. Rousseau's attitude towards the child's body also lay in stark contrast to an established pedagogical tradition which had been encapsulated in Nicholas Andry de Bois Régard's *L'Orthopédie: ou l'art de prévenir et de corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps* twenty years earlier.

Rousseau and Tissot asserted the necessity of reforming the physical education of children. They argued that fitness, or healthiness of the body, was crucial to the development of the mind. Both advocated a strengthening of the body, through an emphasis upon freedom of movement and exposure to the elements. They focused on the importance of rendering the individual useful to society and on the dangerous effects of idleness, or inactivity, upon health. Equally, the dichotomy between town and country, civilization and nature, provided a structure for both authors. The term 'nature' referred to unsubstantiated notions of a 'primitive' or

rural existence, and idealized images of the savage and the peasant. More importantly, ‘nature’ signified virtue, simplicity, self-sufficiency, innocence, happiness, healthiness and goodness. In short, it acted as an all-inclusive catchphrase to encapsulate everything that modern civilization was supposed to lack.

The conception of the degeneration of urban life was one increasingly held in the second half of the century. The term ‘degeneration’ was used by eighteenth-century authors to refer to a general decline in society brought about through internal corruption, thus signalling a corresponding need for its ‘regeneration’ through moral and physical reform. Whilst Rousseau was famed for his critique of civilization, as first set out in his *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750), it is perhaps less clear how Tissot’s manual, published to combat illness in rural areas, could include an exposé of urban ill-health. Recent discussions of *Avis au Peuple* have tended to accept uncritically Tissot’s self-proclaimed altruistic stance.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as I shall argue, his health manual for the rural poor incorporated a far more nuanced agenda than previous accounts have permitted. *Avis au Peuple* did accommodate an understanding of the countryside as essentially healthier than its urban counterpart. This idealization of rural living would become far more prominent in Tissot’s later works such as *De la Santé des Gens de Lettres* (1768) and *Essai sur les Maladies des Gens du Monde* (1770).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See particularly A. Emch-Dérian, *Tissot: Physician of the Enlightenment* (New York, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> A Latin version of *De la Santé des gens de lettres* had been published in 1766, but an unauthorised French version appeared in 1767, which prompted Tissot to publish his own translation of the original Latin text. See, *Sermo inauguralis de valetudine litteratorum* (Lausanne, 1766).



The aim of this chapter is to explore the content of *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile* in order to elucidate their significance for the ‘new hygiene’.<sup>6</sup> I will begin with a discussion of Tissot’s *Avis au Peuple* and an examination of the reasons for the manual’s unprecedented publishing success. Next, Rousseau’s project for social reform will be outlined, followed by an analysis of the importance of health, strength and exercise to his educational agenda.

### The Enlightened Physician

Samuel Auguste André David Tissot was born in 1728 in the Pays de Vaud. He completed his general education in Geneva, before studying medicine at Montpellier.<sup>7</sup> Having obtained his degree, Tissot returned to his home town of Grancy, where an epidemic of smallpox had broken out. His work with the victims of the disease earned him the post of ‘Médecin des Pauvres’ of Lausanne when he moved to the town shortly afterwards. Tissot subsequently became involved in the inoculation debate and published his *L’Inoculation Justifiée* in 1754.<sup>8</sup> In 1760, he published a French version of his *L’Onanisme* which had originally appeared in Latin two years earlier. This notorious book on masturbation was to enjoy publishing success well into the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> However, it was the publication of *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* in 1761 which brought Tissot fame.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The reformed health literature of the second half of the eighteenth century, which I have termed the ‘new hygiene’, will form the subject of the next chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Tissot’s biographical details have been taken from Emch-Dériaz, *Tissot: Physician of the Enlightenment* and *A L’ombre des Lumières: un médecin lausannois et ses patients – Auguste Tissot 1728-1797* (Lausanne, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the smallpox inoculation debate see, L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, Chapter Seven, ‘The Medical Enlightenment’, pp. 470-72.

<sup>9</sup> See, S. A. D. Tissot, *Tentamen de morbis ex manustupratione* (1758) and *L’Onanisme* (Lausanne, 1760). For the popularity of Tissot’s *Onanisme* see, L. Jordanova, ‘The Popularization of Medicine: Tissot on Onanism’, *Textual Practice*, 1 (1987), pp. 68-79. *L’Onanisme* was a proscribed book, and Tissot empathised with Rousseau over the banning of *Émile*. In a letter dated 8 July 1762, he

*Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* was a health manual written ostensibly for the benefit of the rural poor of Tissot's homeland in the Pays de Vaud. Comprising clear and simple medical advice, and remedies containing inexpensive and readily available ingredients, it was designed for those unable to see a physician. Tissot's aim was to produce a self-help guide for the rural community. However, it was never intended to enter the home of the peasant; it was written rather, 'aux personnes intelligentes et charitables, qui vivent dans les campagnes', who could administer the health advice contained in the manual.<sup>11</sup> In his introduction, Tissot delineated both his reasons for targeting the rural community, and his aims for the manual. He then outlined the most common causes of rural maladies, followed by the appropriate action to take at the first signs of ill-health. After a discussion of specific illnesses and their cures, Tissot concluded by paying separate attention to the health of children and to the treatment of diseases 'peculiar' to women.

Tissot was concerned with depopulation. His conviction that Europe's population was in decline was one commonly held in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. This wholly mistaken theory, which caused serious concern for the French State, fuelled debates on the degeneration of modern society.<sup>12</sup> Its influence was felt in discussions that ranged from pregnancy to military reform. Tissot attributed depopulation, which he considered a European-wide phenomenon,

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commented: 'Y auroit-il des Gouvernements dans les quels il importat au Ministere d'interdire tous les secours qui peuvent empecher l'afaiblissement de l'ame ou du corps'. See R. A. Leigh (ed.), *Correspondance complete de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Geneva, 1970), vol. xi, letter 1966.

<sup>10</sup> Thus followed an impressive medical and publishing career, which included the publication of his *De la Santé des gens de lettres* in 1768 and his *Essai sur les maladies des gens du monde* in 1770. His increasing interest in conserving health culminated in his unpublished 'De l'éducation physique et des maladies des petits enfants', written in the late 1780s. Tissot died in 1797 from tuberculosis, the illness which had plagued him since his student days in Montpellier.

<sup>11</sup> S.A.D. Tissot, *Avis au peuple sur sa santé* (Lausanne, 1761), pp. 20-21.

<sup>12</sup> See above, 'Introduction'.

to three main sources: emigration, the decline of marriage (and subsequently births), and ‘la mauvaise méthode employée dans les campagnes pour traiter les malades’.<sup>13</sup> There were two causes of emigration; ‘emigration militaire’ and ‘emigration commercante’.<sup>14</sup> People left their country of origin either to make a living by fighting for foreign armies, or for a trade elsewhere. The decline in wedlock, according to Tissot, was caused by ‘le luxe et la débauche’.<sup>15</sup> When people eventually married, they delayed having children because of the expense involved. They preferred to live a luxurious style of life, rather than to reproduce: ‘L’oisiveté les affoiblit par elle même, et les conduit à la débauche, qui les affoiblit encore davantage; ils n’auront jamais que peu d’enfants mal sains, qui ne seront point en état de fournir des bras aux terres’.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in this context, it was luxury itself that ‘affoiblit la santé’.<sup>17</sup>

Tissot spent some time discussing luxury and debauchery in the towns before moving on to his ‘unique objet’ in writing the book - improving the treatment of the ill in rural areas.<sup>18</sup> He gave a lengthy description of the decadence of town existence and offered comparisons throughout the text between the life of those in the town and those in the country. The peasant invariably fared better than the *gens du monde*. Despite what he regarded as the inadequate treatment of disease in rural areas, the countryside was perceived by Tissot to be a ‘naturally’ healthier place to live than the town. The good health of peasants was seen to be largely due to the higher level of exercise that their style of life demanded.

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<sup>13</sup> Tissot, *Avis au peuple*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 8.



The effect of the differing degrees of exercise on health was particularly evident in Tissot's account of women's diseases. Country women, although subject to the same complaints caused by 'les règles, les grossesses, les couches, et les suites de couches' as urban women, were much healthier according to Tissot.<sup>19</sup> Pubescent girls were far less likely to suffer from health problems before the onset of menstruation because, 'les filles de la campagne, qui menent souvent le genre de vie des hommes, sont moins sujettes à ce mal que celles de la ville'.<sup>20</sup> Exercise, which Tissot regarded as even more vital for women's health than for that of men because of the rigours of childbirth, was denied to town women. The latter's sedentary style of life, brought about through the luxury of urban living, deprived them of the key to limiting the disorders unique to their sex.

Moreover, according to Tissot, town life, as well as corrupting its own inhabitants, also polluted the surrounding countryside. Using the example of domestic service for country girls, he argued that time spent in an urban townhouse affected their ability to give birth. Their first labour would invariably leave them weak and they would remain 'dans un état de langueur, de foiblesse, de dépérissement', unable to have more children.<sup>21</sup> Thus the 'natural' régime of the peasant could be infected by a corrupting urban influence. Tissot argued that the most common cause of illness in the countryside was 'l'excès du travail pendant long temps', which often occurred as a result of maltreatment by the peasant's wealthy urban counterparts.<sup>22</sup> Other causes of ill-health, such as exposure to extremes of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

temperature, inferior quality of food and poorly ventilated accommodation in inappropriate locations (e.g. near marshy land), were also argued to be the result of the enforced poverty of the peasant.

Furthermore, the illnesses that peasants did suffer were not adequately treated. Tissot regarded the insufficient management of sickness in the country to be the result of the combined effect of a shortage of trained physicians in rural areas and the consequent misuse by peasants of outmoded remedies. According to the Swiss physician, these ineffectual cures were distributed through existing self-help manuals and by unlicensed medical practitioners. He said of current literature: 'Je n'ignore pas cependant, que l'on a déjà quelques ouvrages destinés pour les malades de la campagne qui sont privés de secours; mais les uns, quoique faits dans un bon but, produisent un mauvais effet'.<sup>23</sup> Tissot maintained that the best way to fight quackery was to distribute enlightened medical advice.

However, Tissot was careful to stress that his manual was not designed as a replacement for the advice of a physician. *Avis au Peuple* was to serve as a palliative measure, while the root cause of depopulation in the countryside (lack of trained physicians) could be addressed. Whilst Tissot asserted that civilization contaminated the countryside, he also argued that it offered the means to cure it, through the town-made physician. Although he subscribed to an idealized view of nature, even as he became more influenced by Rousseau, he never entirely adopted the philosopher's anti-intellectual stance.<sup>24</sup> Tissot continued to promote the ability of 'enlightened' physicians to cure disease, and the progress of scientific medicine.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Vila also notes that whilst Tissot's work contained many Rousseauian overtones, his position on Rousseau's 'culture-bashing diatribes' remained ambivalent. See Anne C. Vila, 'Enlightened

## The Significance of Tissot's *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé*

How did *Avis au Peuple* come to enjoy such publishing success? Matthew Ramsey, amongst others, attributes the eminence of *Avis au Peuple* to a new blend of professional medicine and popular health advice.<sup>25</sup> The 'scientific' caution with which Tissot wrote is seen to set *Avis au Peuple* apart from existing health manuals. Texts such as Madame Fouquet's (1590-1681) *Recueil de Receptes* (1676) and Philbert Guybert's (died 1633) *Le Médecin Charitable* (1632) were predominantly charitable works. This tradition, which had its roots in the Counter-Reformation, combined 'popular' Galenism with household recipes, magic and secrets.<sup>26</sup> Tissot was certainly careful to distance himself from traditional health care advice. He regarded his 'professional' counsel to be based upon 'scientific' theories of hygiene and disease prevention. This, he argued, was in stark contrast to existing self-help manuals such as Madame Fouquet's tract, which, 'ne servent qu'à entretenir l'ignorance, la crédulité, la superstition, et les préjugés plus faux sur la santé'.<sup>27</sup>

Tissot's contemporaries also considered *Avis au Peuple* to be in a different class to existing health literature. Barbeu Dubourg, a Paris-trained physician and editor of the *Gazette de Médecine*, reviewed a new edition of *Avis au Peuple* published in 1762:

Cet Ouvrage est fort supérieur à tous ceux qui ont été publiés jusqu'ici  
sous les différens titres de Médecin Charitable, Médecin des Pauvres,

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Minds and Scholarly Bodies from Tissot to Sade', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 23 (1994), pp. 207-20.

<sup>25</sup> See Ramsey, 'The Popularization of Medicine in France, 1650-1900' and Emch-Déraz, 'The Non-Naturals Made Easy', in R. Porter (ed.), *The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850* (London, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> See L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997), Chapter Four, 'The Medical Penumbra', pp. 273-83 and Ramsey, 'The Popularization of Medicine'.

<sup>27</sup> Tissot, *Avis au Peuple*, p. 17.



Abrégé de Médecine, Manuel de Médecine, Dictionnaire portatif de Médecine, Remèdes familiers, Recueil de remèdes simples et faciles, etc.

Ainsi l'on ne doit pas être étonné si les éditions de celui-ci se multiplient rapidement<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Dubourg regarded *Avis au Peuple*'s success as unsurprising, given its superior quality.

However, it would be problematic to regard the publishing triumph of *Avis au Peuple* as simply a reflection of the 'progress' that the text represents within a story of medical professionalization. I would suggest that the reasons for the popularity of *Avis au Peuple* are rather more complex and need to be placed within the context of broader cultural preoccupations such as the idealization of the 'natural' and the critique of modern civilization. Arguably, one of the keys to the success of *Avis au Peuple* lay in the importance which Tissot placed upon comparing and contrasting urban and rural health.

Tissot's *Avis au Peuple* had been written for the benefit of the same section of society as that to which previous self-help manuals had been addressed; namely, the rural poor. The guides of Fouquet and Guybert had similarly enjoyed a wider readership than the titles of their texts would suggest. Once incorporated into the popular edited series known as the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, this type of health literature reached an even wider audience.<sup>29</sup> Whilst supposedly 'popular', this series of texts also had a client base in the middling and upper ranks.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Tissot's was not the

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<sup>28</sup> *Gazette de Médecine*, Saturday 20 March 1762, pp. 177-78.

<sup>29</sup> For the health literature contained in the *Bibliothèque Bleue* see W. Coleman, 'The People's Health: Medical Themes in Eighteenth-Century French Popular Culture', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 51 (1977), pp. 55-74.

<sup>30</sup> Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, chapter 4, 'The Medical Penumbra', pp. 273-283.

first rural health guide to extend to a broadly urban audience. However, *Avis au Peuple* differed in the manner in which it self-consciously addressed this wider readership. Through its constant comparisons between urban and rural living, *Avis au Peuple* ensured that urban health was considered alongside the health of the rural population.

Indeed, Tissot's health advice could just as well be utilised by an urban readership as a rural one. In fact, the régimes suggested by Tissot for masturbators, peasants, intellectuals and the rich alike, were all practically interchangeable.<sup>31</sup> This is witnessed in Tissot's recommendation to peasants at the first sign of illness: 'Qu'ils se promènent le plus souvent qu'ils pourront à pied, en voiture, en char, à cheval'.<sup>32</sup> This guidance, identical to that found in Tissot's other health manuals, indicated that exercise, or motion, was regarded as key to the prevention of illness, whatever one's station in life. The peasant who, according to Tissot, was already constantly active, was still advised to make exercise or travel part of his régime.

With *Avis au Peuple*, Tissot effectively replaced the charitable objective behind more traditional self-help health literature with a medical one. In this way poverty, or an inability to access the physician, ceased to be the criteria by which one became the subject of health advice. Instruction could be administered to different audiences. The guidance which emerged in *Avis au Peuple*, and was taken further in Tissot's later works, concentrated on the physical reform of a largely urban readership. Thus, the Swiss physician paved the way for the medical take-over of

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<sup>31</sup> Anne Vila makes the point that Tissot's advice to *gens de lettres* and *gens du monde* is practically identical to the régime advice offered in his *Onanisme*. However, Vila does not discuss *Avis au Peuple* within this context. See Vila, 'Enlightened Minds'.

<sup>32</sup> Tissot, *Avis au Peuple*, p. 82.

self-help health literature.<sup>33</sup> In *Avis au Peuple*, the Galenic non-naturals (the Classical interpretation of external influences on the body, such as food and drink, or exercise and rest) were reclaimed by the physician, and purged of the unprofessional, superstitious and outmoded remedies of the charlatan.

Tissot used the Galenic non-naturals as a framework for understanding health preservation. It was through their employment that he was able to juxtapose town and country life throughout *Avis au Peuple*. As we shall see, he was to use this structural device more overtly in his *Avis au Gens du Monde*, ten years later.<sup>34</sup> Here, the non-naturals were used to illustrate a gradation of health, which placed the labourer at the top and the *gens du monde* at the bottom.

Tissot's health manual, which endorsed the growing belief in the need for regeneration advanced ten years earlier by Rousseau's first *Discours*, struck a chord with the reading public. An admiration for the 'natural' existence of the peasant permeated Tissot's advice to the rural poor. Tissot's manual stimulated the desire for health preservation advice, further encouraged by Rousseau's championing of a 'natural' education in *Émile*, published the following year.

### **Rousseau's Social Project**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712.<sup>35</sup> After leaving the city in 1728, he travelled around France, Switzerland, Savoy and Italy before arriving in

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<sup>33</sup> See below, Chapter Three, Section 'The Physician as Interpreter of Nature'.

<sup>34</sup> See below, Chapter Three, Section 'The Non-Naturals as a Gauge of Virtue'.

<sup>35</sup> For general discussions of Rousseau, see J. Bloch, *Rousseauism and Education in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1995); C. Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1986); Cranston, *The Noble Savage*; R. Darnton, 'Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity', in *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1985), pp. 215-56; A. Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History* (Toronto, 1987); M. Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and*



Paris in 1742. During his time in Paris, he befriended many of the *philosophes* and wrote several articles for the *Encyclopédie*. In 1750 and 1755, respectively, Rousseau published his *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* and *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*; two controversial works in which the author exposed the detrimental effects of 'progress' on both the individual and society. The views expressed therein simultaneously brought him fame and infamy. Whereas the meta-narrative of the Enlightenment emphasised man's advancement, Rousseau, in contrast, accentuated the degeneration of civilization.<sup>36</sup> In 1762, Rousseau followed his immensely popular novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1760) with *Émile; ou sur l'Éducation* and *Du Contrat Social*.<sup>37</sup>

In these texts, Rousseau set out his ideas on the history of man and civilization and his agenda for the reform of the individual, the family and society. He argued that nature and society were at odds with each other, and that it was this contradiction which produced all the vices of men and the wrongs in society. 'Primitive' man, according to Rousseau, was naturally good because of his innocence. Living outside of society, he had to be self-sufficient. Without social influence, he was able to follow his own sense, which naturally followed the correct path of virtue. However, 'primitive' man soon encountered natural obstacles and so

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*the Philosophes* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994); C. Orwin and N. Tarcov (eds.), *The Legacy of Rousseau* (Chicago, 1997); J. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, Eng. Trans. (Chicago, 1988); M. Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (New York, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> See Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment*.

<sup>37</sup> Having already retreated from Parisian life and the company of friends such as Diderot and Voltaire, Rousseau was forced to flee France after the scandal caused by the prohibition of *Émile*, which contained his views on natural religion. After nearly two decades in isolation, he returned to Paris in 1770 and remained there until shortly before his death in 1778. Rousseau's last years were spent producing a series of autobiographical writings, which were all published posthumously, the most notorious of which was his *Confessions*. Biographical details of Rousseau have been taken from

developed his skills in order to overcome them. This developmental process both distanced man from nature and made him aware of his difference from the other animals. Thus, the ability to work made him reflect upon his actions and this produced in him a sense of pride. This reflection destroyed both man's innocence and self-sufficiency. The selfishness that pride had induced perverted the innocent love of self (*amour propre*) and produced instead a vain *amour de soi*. When he began comparing himself to others, man's desires increased and outstripped his capacity to fulfil them. This new vice in man produced the corrupt society which Rousseau equated with eighteenth-century France.<sup>38</sup>

Rousseau's answer to the problems of a corrupt civilization was not to return to nature, but to reform society through the development of a collective, rather than selfish pride. However, in order for the people to have the same goals for society, a 'general will' had to be manipulated through education. As Norman Hampson summarises: 'Public education was concerned, not with guiding the development of the individual personality, but with the process by which society inculcated *vertu* into the body of the citizens'.<sup>39</sup> Rousseau maintained that the most successful societies such as Sparta and Rome had denatured man through public instruction and in this way had rendered the State more important than the individual. Education was, therefore, the State's most powerful tool.

Rousseau aimed to artificially reconstruct, through education, a return to the simplicity, feeling and virtue of the natural man captured within a social rather than a

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T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford, 1995) and Allan Bloom's introduction to J. J. Rousseau, *Emile: or on Education*, Eng. Trans. (London, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, pp. 22-30.

<sup>39</sup> N. Hampson, *Will and Circumstance. Montesquieu, Rousseau and the French Revolution* (London, 1983), p. 42.

natural setting. He held a deep admiration for contemporary rural existence, which he claimed evoked the self-sufficiency of 'primitive' man. Rousseau argued against the use of the productive resources of society to raise the living standard of the whole population. Instead, he advocated a policy of self-sufficiency and labour.

In his second *Discours*, Rousseau argued that the socialisation of modern man had caused him to become weak, producing an excess of labour in some people and an excess of idleness in others. This state then induced physical maladies unknown to 'natural' man.<sup>40</sup> The type of society which Rousseau envisaged would remove the distinction between work and leisure activities such as hunting and dancing, and the unequal measure in which they currently co-existed. In his new society, everyone would work and everyone would exercise their bodies for the general good.<sup>41</sup> The strengthening of the body formed an essential part of Rousseau's agenda of social reform.

Clearly central to Rousseau's programme of social regeneration was the development of a public education. Yet, surprisingly, unlike many other educational works that were published after the expulsion of the Jesuits, Rousseau chose not to address the question of a State-run educational system in *Émile*.<sup>42</sup> Rather, his treatise pertained to the private education of a particular male pupil, Émile, from infancy to marriage. In *Émile*, Rousseau chose to address a domestic or 'natural' education, because he considered it impossible to establish a civil schooling system in modern

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<sup>40</sup> Rousseau, greatly influenced by the natural history of Buffon, set out to write a natural history of man. See Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment*, p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> A. Rosenberg, 'Rousseau's View of Work and Leisure in the Community', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 1981 (18), pp. 3-15.

<sup>42</sup> The expulsion of the Jesuits, who had been responsible for the lion's share of French schooling, left an educational void which needed to be filled. For a full discussion of the expulsion of the Jesuits and its impact upon educational debates see below, Chapter Five, Section 'Education and the Enlightened State.'



society's present degenerative state. Whilst in *Du Contrat Social*, Rousseau dealt with society and its citizens, and in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, marriage and the family, in *Émile* he concentrated upon the education of a 'natural' man, who could live successfully in society as it currently existed. In short, Émile's education was to act as an inoculation against the luxury of modern life.

### **Émile's Body**

Physical exercise was central to Rousseau's theory of 'natural' education as laid out in *Émile*. He argued: 'Tous ceux qui ont réfléchi sur la manière de vivre des anciens attribuent aux exercices de la gymnastique cette vigueur de corps et d'âme qui les distingue le plus sensiblement des modernes'.<sup>43</sup> At all stages of Émile's educational journey, Rousseau stressed the need to toughen the body through its exposure to danger and risk in order to prepare for the hardships of life. Exercise was used by Rousseau to strengthen the body, develop the mind and protect the soul.

Until the age of twelve, Émile's education centres entirely upon the body. Living as a peasant, he leads a 'natural' style of life. Rousseau shared Tissot's belief in the essential healthiness of a traditional rural existence. It is not until his education is complete that Émile is exposed to urban society. Rousseau named 'nature' as his guide in the first years of Émile's development: 'Observez la nature, et suivez la route qu'elle vous trace. Elle exerce continuellement les enfants; elle endurecit leur tempérament par des épreuves de toute espèce; elle leur apprend de bonne heure ce que c'est que peine et douleur'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the first years of Émile's life

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<sup>43</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou de l'Éducation*, François et Pierre Richards (eds.) (Paris, 1964), p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

are spent in strengthening the body through unrestricted movement, constant exercise and cold water bathing.

While Émile's young body is being exercised and hardened, his intellectual education is completely 'negative'. Through exercise, Émile's soul is protected from vice and his mind is prepared for study by making the instrument of its learning (his body) as strong as possible:

Voulez-vous donc cultiver l'intelligence de votre élève; cultivez les forces qu'elle doit gouverner. Exercez continuellement son corps; rendez-le robuste et sain, pour le rendre sage et raisonnable; qu'il travaille, qu'il agisse, qu'il coure, qu'il crie, qu'il soit toujours en mouvement; qu'il soit homme par la vigueur, et bientôt il le sera par la raison.<sup>45</sup>

At the age of twelve, Émile has more strength than he needs for the first time in his life and so can begin to study. He learns by action, which enables his body and mind to be exercised simultaneously. Émile does not learn about life through books, but through his own experiences.<sup>46</sup> Thus, his desire to learn is fuelled since all his lessons are relevant to him. The only book that Émile is allowed to read is *Robinson Crusoe*; the self-sufficient man is his model. Utility is Rousseau's guide at this stage of education and the tutor constantly asks of his pupil: 'A quoi cela est-il bon?'<sup>47</sup> It is with this in mind that Émile learns a trade. Carpentry will not only exercise his body, but enable him to earn a living whatever befalls him.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>46</sup> As Rousseau put it, Émile should learn, if at all possible, from the thing itself, and not from its sign.

<sup>47</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 202.

It is not until the age of eighteen, when Émile has completed his 'éducation...des choses' that he learns about the vices and virtues of men through the study of history.<sup>48</sup> Kept in ignorance of sex, he learns instead about friendship, and through exercise and labour his developing sexual desire is controlled. Moreover, thanks to a careful education, when Émile is ready for marriage he chooses a partner on the basis of companionship, rather than sensual desire.

The development of a strong and healthy body was at the core of Émile's education. According to Rousseau, a healthy body was a necessary condition of freedom; the ultimate goal in life. A person had to be healthy in order to be useful; the sick were a burden on those around them. Whilst nature alone could provide a healthy constitution (Rousseau regarded healthy infants as the only kind worth teaching), with the right physical education good health could be maintained throughout life. Reflecting on Émile's development as he reached the age of twelve, Rousseau said of him: 'Je crois pouvoir compter hardiment la santé et la bonne constitution au nombre des avantages acquis par son éducation, ou plutôt au nombre des dons de la nature que son éducation lui a conservés'.<sup>49</sup>

However, whilst health was a central educational goal, Émile was not to waste time in trying to cure his physical ills. According to Rousseau, man in a 'natural' state lived in the present and for the present, and so neither reflected on the past nor anticipated the future. It was only when he learned to reflect that he envisaged for the first time his own death. This was the source of modern man's obsession with his own health. Rousseau believed the science of medicine to be the fashion amongst an idle *gens du monde* who, having nothing to do with their time, 'le

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



passent à se conserver'.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to Tissot, who made a clear distinction between what he saw as the 'enlightened' advice of the trained physician and the ineffectual remedies of the charlatan, Rousseau regarded the entire medical world with contempt. In *Émile*, he launched a scathing attack on the physician:

Je ne sais, pour moi, de quelle maladie nous guérissent les médecins, mais je sais qu'ils nous en donnent de bien funestes: la lâcheté, la pusillanimité, la crédulité, la terreur de la mort: s'ils guérissent le corps, ils tuent le courage. Que nous importe qu'ils fassent marcher des cadavres? Ce sont des hommes qu'il nous faut, et l'on n'en voit point sortir de leurs mains.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, whilst it was essential for Émile to be healthy, as a 'natural' man he would not have recourse to doctors, and would only concern himself with his health preservation, in so far as it was within his own power to do so.

The importance which Rousseau placed upon health and strength should be considered within the context of his own poor health. Jean Starobinski argues that whilst Rousseau was an 'apostle of merciless natural selection', he himself only survived because of the care of others. Rousseau was precisely the sickly child that he described in *Émile* as a living useless life: his definition of robustness 'embodies everything he lacked'.<sup>52</sup> This is witnessed in a letter from Rousseau to Tissot written in 1769 where, typically, the correspondence centred upon discussions of the state of their own and other people's health. Rousseau thanked the physician for his recent health advice and commented that, 'Je me suis à peu de chose près conformé à tout

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

ce que vous m'avez prescrit'. In addition to following a strict diet, Rousseau had been exercising as part of his régime: 'Je me promène tous les jours mais doucement, sans me lasser et sans me baisser'.<sup>53</sup>

### From Preservation to Exposure

In promoting the exposure of children to physical hardship, Rousseau reacted against a pedagogical tradition that dated from the late fifteenth century.<sup>54</sup> This centred upon the fluidity of the child and the need to mould the growing body into its 'correct' form. Directed at the nobility, this style of literature reached its zenith with the publication of Nicolas Andry de Bois Regard's *Orthopédie* in 1741.

Born in 1658, Andry was a graduate of the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris. Author of a number of medical texts, he was also engaged for some years as editor of the *Journal des Sçavants*. Andry's *L'Orthopédie: ou l'art de prevenir et de corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps*, centred upon the control of movement and on the preservation and correction of the child's body.<sup>55</sup> The term 'Orthopédie', formed by Andry from the Greek words for 'straight' and 'child', encapsulated his medical and pedagogical agenda. Advocating the use of a bewildering array of corsets, lead weights and sharp pieces of whalebone, Andry's aim was to mould the

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<sup>52</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 'On Rousseau's Illness', pp. 365-77.

<sup>53</sup> 'Rousseau au Professor Samuel-Auguste-André-David Tissot', 1<sup>st</sup> February 1769, contained in R. A. Leigh (ed.), *Correspondance complète de Jean Jacques Rousseau* (Geneva, 1970), vol. xxxvii, letter 6536.

<sup>54</sup> For this pedagogical tradition, see G. Vigarello, 'The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility', in M. Feher (ed.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (London, 1989), pp. 149-99.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Andry de Bois Regard, *L'Orthopédie: ou l'art de prevenir et de corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps* (Paris, 1741).

child's body, in the manner of a young sapling strapped to a stake, into an upright and graceful form.<sup>56</sup>

External appearance was at the heart of Andry's project:

Nous sommes nés les uns pour les autres; il faut éviter d'avoir rien de choquant, et quand on seroit seul dans le monde, il ne conviendrait pas de négliger son corps au point de le laisser devenir difforme; ce seroit aller contre l'intention même du Créateur. C'est sur ce principe qu'est fondée cette Orthopédie.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, Andry advised parents to be vigilant in the control of their offspring:

Les enfans sont sujets à se faire des entorses, et une entorse négligée peut quelquefois rendre boîteux pour toujours. C'est pourquoi on ne sçauroit apporter trop de soin pour empêcher les enfans de trop courir, ou de trop sauter; car ce sont ordinairement là les causes de leurs entorses.<sup>58</sup>

A child's movement was to be strictly monitored. Andry maintained that while young noblemen should be engaged in fencing, riding, wrestling and other warlike exercises, far more moderate pursuits needed to be found for children. He viewed the child as a precious investment, one that needed to be carefully preserved and nurtured in order to reap the rewards on its maturity into adulthood. According to this tradition, the body acted as the external indicator of good breeding. As such, posture and grace were the most vital lessons an educator could impart to his student.

Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli (1719-1803), in his *Le Vérable Mentor, ou l'Éducation de la Noblesse* (1759) echoed Andry's use of the body as 'l'interprète de

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<sup>56</sup> See Illustrations, Numbers One and Two.

<sup>57</sup> Andry, *Orthopédie*, vol. 1, pp. lxxvi-lxxvii.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 295.



l'ame'.<sup>59</sup> The Marquis was a writer and governor to the children of Prince Rewski of Poland. Although critical of pedagogical methods which encouraged 'un certain air qui la rendent automate', Caraccioli suggested that a particular bodily training was necessary for entry into polite society:

Il faut l'accoutumer à se plier et à prendre différentes postures selon les circonstances. Ici, c'est un pied, qui, glissant l'un devant l'autre avec grace, annonce le respect; là, c'est un signe de tête, qui, bien ordonné, dénote l'approbation. Ici, c'est un regard, qui, tombant sans affectation, exprime la modestie; là, c'est une démarche élégante que produit une noble fierté. On jugera ces détails puériles, et cependant ce sont ces détails qui forment la symétrie des sociétés, ce qu'on appelle enfin le sçavoir-vivre.<sup>60</sup>

Rousseau's treatment of Émile's physical education represented a complete break from the educational ideas expressed by Andry and Caraccioli. Yet, Rousseau did concur with a view of the child's body as malleable. Following established pedagogical thought, Rousseau acknowledged that children's 'fibres' were more flexible than those of an adult. He also used the analogy of the child as a young sapling made popular by earlier literature.<sup>61</sup> However, in contrast to Andry's correction of the body, Rousseau instead used Émile's adaptability to strengthen, train and prepare the boy for his future. Although both authors presented a view of childhood as training for adult life, Andry's instruction focused exclusively upon the

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<sup>59</sup> Caraccioli, *Le Vritable mentor, ou l'éducation de la noblesse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Frankfurt, 1762), p. 48. Caraccioli's title pays tribute to Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque*. As we shall explore, in this educational treatise Télémaque's tutor is called 'Mentor'. See below, Section 'Émile as Educational Novel: the Influence of Fénelon'.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. vii and p. 48.

external form, whilst Rousseau made no reference in *Émile* to his pupil's appearance other than to indicate the child's health and strength.

As we have seen, Rousseau advocated a harsh physical training for children. Émile's body was not to be constricted or preserved in any way because, according to Rousseau, children raised delicately were most at risk of dying at a young age.<sup>62</sup> Rather, Émile was to develop the strength to preserve himself. As Rousseau argued: 'Vivre, ce n'est pas respirer, c'est agir'.<sup>63</sup> Rousseau explicitly rejected the idea that children were incapable of playing adult games, and argued that Émile could and should play men's activities, such as tennis, croquet, billiards and football. He attacked traditional children's pursuits such as shuttlecock and spinning-top because, he argued, they challenged neither bodily strength nor reason. He was particularly critical of shuttlecock, which he regarded to be a woman's game and not suitable for boys. Thus, according to Rousseau, risk and danger were necessary elements of play: 'Loin d'être attentif à éviter qu'Émile ne se blesse, je serais fort fâché qu'il ne se blessât jamais, et qu'il grandît sans connaître la douleur. Souffrir est la première chose qu'il doit apprendre, et celle qu'il aura le plus grand besoin de savoir'.<sup>64</sup>

### **Sophie's Body**

In *Émile*, Rousseau focused upon the education of boys. Although the education of Émile's marriage partner Sophie was considered, it received scant

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<sup>61</sup>This observation is made by Ludmilla Jordanova in 'The Popularization of Medicine'.

<sup>62</sup> In *Émile*, Rousseau referred to the high infant mortality rate. He pointed out that half of children born died before they were eight years old.

<sup>63</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

attention compared with the lengthy treatment of Émile's instruction.<sup>65</sup> However, the reform of women lay at the heart of Rousseau's plans for social renewal. Rousseau, like Tissot, voiced concern over depopulation, and regarded women's neglect of motherhood in favour of a life of luxury to be one of its major causes. According to Rousseau, women needed to be retaught how to be mothers: 'Mais que les mères daignent nourrir leurs enfants, les mœurs vont se réformer d'elles-mêmes, les sentiments de la nature se réveiller dans tous les coeurs; l'État va se repeupler: ce premier point, ce point seul va tout réunir'.<sup>66</sup>

The duties of men and women were intended by Rousseau to be very different. This was partly due to what he perceived to be *natural* differences between them, but more importantly because of the needs of society as he envisaged them. Men and women were equal in Rousseau's eyes, but different: 'la fin des travaux est commune, mais les travaux sont différents'.<sup>67</sup> Thus, it followed that the education of men and women should be moderated to account for their distinct social roles.

As Sophie's duties in adult life - to be a wife and mother - were fixed, her education was far more specific than her marriage partner's. Unlike Émile who, as we shall see, is never to be made aware that he is being educated, Sophie must be ever-conscious of her instruction. She needs to be taught constraint, because that will be her role in life. She will always be within the care of her father or her husband. Whilst Sophie's soul is taught control, her body, like Émile's, must have complete freedom of movement. Corsets should never be employed. Exercise is

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<sup>65</sup> It is with the character of Julie in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* that Rousseau explores in greater depth his complex view of women.

<sup>66</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 18.



equally important for Sophie, because she needs to be strong in order to have healthy children. However, she does not need to be subjected to the same harsh training: ‘il n’est pas nécessaire pour donner des soldats à l’État que les mères aient porté le mousquet et fait l’exercice à la prussienne’.<sup>68</sup> Limits are placed on Sophie’s physical education by her social role, rather than her natural capacities.

Although Sophie’s physical education followed a more moderate régime, clearly a crucial part of being a good student of either sex was to be healthy.<sup>69</sup> In addition to being a prerequisite of successful motherhood, good health was also the basis for Sophie’s attractiveness. In an attack on fashionable women, Rousseau advised: ‘la grâce ne va point sans l’aisance; la délicatesse n’est pas la langueur, et il ne faut pas être malsaine pour plaire. On excite la pitié quand on souffre; mais le plaisir et le désir cherchent la fraîcheur de la santé’.<sup>70</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Four, natural female weakness was questioned in the reformed health literature of the second half of the century. A programme of exercise was advocated in order to render *le sexe* more robust.

### ***Émile* as Educational Novel: the Influence of Fénelon**

Despite Rousseau’s limited treatment of Sophie’s education, her character is crucial to the plot of *Émile*. As well as being an educational treatise, it is also a carefully orchestrated love story. Sophie is chosen in advance by Émile’s tutor, who manipulates his charge’s feelings for her before he even knows of her existence. He

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 457.

<sup>69</sup> Penny Weis emphasises the importance of physical training for both Émile and Sophie for their roles in adult life. See Penny A. Weiss, *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex, and Politics* (New York, 1993), p. 17.

then organises their ‘chance’ meeting and oversees their courtship. The role of the tutor is central to the narrative of *Émile*’s. He controls Émile’s entire education from selecting his nurse to handpicking his marriage partner. Every lesson that Émile experiences has been, unbeknown to him, coordinated by his governor. The literary device of an all-seeing tutor and a malleable pupil is clearly taken from Fénelon’s immensely popular novel, *Télémaque*.

From a poor provincial aristocratic family, François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon (1651-1715) trained as a priest.<sup>71</sup> Through the patronage of Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux, Fénelon gained attention at Court. He became tutor to Louis XIV’s grandson and heir in 1689, and it was for the duc de Bourgogne that he wrote *Télémaque, fils d’Ulysse* in 1693. *Télémaque* was viewed as a ‘mirror-for-princes’ treatise.<sup>72</sup> It came near the end of a long tradition of royal advice literature, whereby the text was viewed as a mirror to hold up to oneself, reflecting back the qualities of kingship. As the son of Ulysses, Télémaque (or Telemachus) was destined to be the King of Ithaca. Fénelon took advantage of the disappearance of Télémaque from Books Five to Fifteen of Homer’s *Odyssey*, and developed the character for his own purposes.

*Télémaque* was the tale of the education of a young prince by a wise tutor. The Goddess Minerva disguises herself as Télémaque’s ‘Mentor’ in order to educate him, and through their travels and adventures she teaches the young prince how to be a virtuous ruler. In this educational novel, Fénelon proposed a society based upon

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<sup>70</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, pp. 458-59.

<sup>71</sup> Biographical details have been taken from Riley’s introduction to his English edition of François de Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, edited and translated by P. Riley (Cambridge, 1994), pp. xiii-xxxi.

simplicity, labour and agriculture; stripped of luxury, splendour and fruitless military expansion.<sup>73</sup> Printed without the author's permission in 1699, Louis XIV read the tale as a satire on his own luxury and bellicosity, and Fénelon was banished to his Cambrai diocese, never to return to Versailles.

Rousseau clearly admired Fénelon and there are obvious comparisons to be drawn between the education of Émile and that of Télémaque, in addition to the similarity between their relationships with the tutor and Mentor. Rousseau also developed Fénelon's anti-luxury stance and advocacy of simple living. The importance which Fénelon placed upon agriculture and self-sufficiency was akin to Rousseau's own vision of a reformed society. Émile, like Télémaque, is brought up to know a simple style of life.<sup>74</sup> Both experience (and learn from) hardships set out for them by their tutors. Incorporating a Galenic model of health, Fénelon called for a moderate style of life for all members of society. Whilst he did not refer specifically to types of physical exercise, Fénelon advocated the healthiness and bodily strength that an active style of life procured. Although he condemned the grand architecture of the ancient world, Fénelon called for the maintenance of public buildings designed for chariot races, wrestling or fighting, on the grounds that these exercises rendered the body 'plus adroits et plus vigoureux'.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See A. T. Gable, 'The Prince and the Mirror: Louis XIV, Fénelon, Royal Narcissism and the Legacy of Machiavelli', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* (1993), no. 15, pp. 243-68.

<sup>73</sup> Virtuous simplicity is a theme running throughout the text. However, in book X of *Télémaque*, Mentor talks openly with the king Idomeneus about how he can improve the kingdom of Salente. It is here that Fénelon explicitly sets out his vision of a new society.

<sup>74</sup> During his Travels, Télémaque is offered a vision of simple living, through Adoam's tale of the inhabitants of a land called Bétique. These people lived purely from the land, and had no concept of luxury. See Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, edited by Jacques le Brun (Paris, 1995), book VII, pp. 153-161.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., book X, p. 221.



Rousseau also incorporated the story of *Télémaque* into his own plot. Sophie falls in love with Émile because she recognises in him her hero, Télémaque, about whom she has read. When Émile is separated from Sophie during the travels which conclude his education, he reads *Télémaque* so that he can know better how to keep Sophie's affections. In addition, Émile and Sophie's mature love, based upon companionship rather than passion, echoes Télémaque's love for his destined wife Antiope, the daughter of Indomeneus.<sup>76</sup>

However, for all Rousseau's allusion to Fénelon, Télémaque is ultimately untenable as a hero in his eyes, because he is a prince. Despite Rousseau's admiration for them, he argued that Télémaque and Mentor were 'chimeras'. While Fénelon believed in a hierarchical society based upon birth, Rousseau said of Émile and his tutor: 'Si nous étions rois et sages, le premier bien que nous voudrions faire à nous-mêmes et aux autres serait d'abdiquer la royauté et de redevenir ce que nous sommes'.<sup>77</sup> Although Émile is a wealthy pupil, Rousseau creates in him a kind of 'Everyman' through his 'natural' education.<sup>78</sup> By making his pupil rich, Rousseau simply provided more choices for his adult life. He was wholly unconcerned with Émile's status in society. Therefore, *Émile* can be regarded not as a mirror for princes, but as a mirror for the citizen. It is similarly in his rejection of the education of the gentleman or ruler that Rousseau breaks away from his greatest influence, John Locke.

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<sup>76</sup> Earlier in his adventures, Télémaque feels a passionate 'blind' love for Eucharis, but through Mentor's education he comes to realise that a love based upon merit is the only true love. See Fénelon, *Télémaque* book XVII, pp. 375-77.

<sup>77</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 597.

<sup>78</sup> 'Everyman' is a term that Riley uses in his comparison of Émile and Télémaque. See Fénelon, *Telemachus*, Introduction, p. xviii.

## Rousseau's Critique of Noble Exercises

John Locke (1632-1704) wrote widely on political philosophy, epistemology, education, economics, theology and medicine.<sup>79</sup> Best known for his *Treatises of Government* (1690) and *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693. Aimed at parents, the text was concerned with the private education of a gentleman. The aim of his education being to procure 'a sound mind in a sound body', Locke took care to stress the importance of maintaining health.<sup>80</sup> He began his educational manual with a discussion of measures by which to promote the health of the body, which he summarised with 'these few and easily observable rules':

Plenty of open air, exercise and sleep; plain diet, no wine or strong drink, and very little or no physick; not too warm and straight clothing, especially the head and feet kept cold, and the feet often used to cold water, and exposed to wet.<sup>81</sup>

In his discussion of exercise, Locke concentrated his attentions upon traditional noble pursuits such as dancing, riding, fencing and music which, he argued, developed the carriage and manners which were vital indicators of breeding.<sup>82</sup> Locke stressed the importance of a strong body, but chiefly as a tool for the mind. Intellectual instruction was given far more emphasis than physical education. While Rousseau clearly followed Locke's epistemology (empirical learning through sense

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<sup>79</sup> Biographical details on Locke have been taken from T. Honan (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 493-96.

<sup>80</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Oxford, 1989), p. 83.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>82</sup> Locke does talk briefly about swimming as an activity which both saves lives and is advantageous to health, but it is treated separately to the exercises regarded by Locke as necessary for a gentleman. See Locke, *Education*, p. 88. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, swimming, advocated by Rousseau, became a fashionable exercise amongst the elite in France at the end of the *Ancien Régime*.

perception) he went much further in the emphasis he placed upon the development of the body.

Although Rousseau referred his reader to Locke's rules of physical education, he was in fact critical of the kind of 'exclusive' exercises that Locke recommended.<sup>83</sup> He questioned the utility of traditional noble pastimes such as hunting and dancing and argued that the public walks of Paris (the Luxembourg, the Tuileries, and the Palais-Royal) were pernicious for children because they made them vain and accustomed them to being observed. Instead, children should walk in the country, and should learn balance and agility on a cliff top, not in a dancing hall.<sup>84</sup> According to Rousseau, parents should think less about the display of wealth involved in the provision of riding and dancing tuition, and instead consider the utility of any given activity. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, Rousseau argued that the exercise of swimming was neglected despite its obvious utility, simply because it was free.

More traditional forms of pedagogical literature had regarded noble birth as a prerequisite of a successful education. Hereditary status, it had been argued, should be combined with instruction to produce the ideal gentleman. As we shall see, debates in the middle decades of the eighteenth century questioned the role of blood within education and this was to have important implications for questions of military reform.<sup>85</sup> Rousseau contributed to this debate in his rejection of the notion that hereditary lineage could act as its own educator.

In *Émile*, Rousseau relates the story of a lazy child who had to receive instruction in running, as he was intended for a military career. However, 'il s'était

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<sup>83</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 126.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-40.

<sup>85</sup> See below, Chapters Five and Six.



persuadé, je ne sais comment, qu'un homme de son rang ne devait rien faire ni rien savoir, et que sa noblesse devait lui tenir lieu de bras, de jambes, ainsi que de toute espèce de mérite'.<sup>86</sup> The child was eventually trained through the use of incentives. Rousseau persuaded him to compete against peasant children in running competitions, the winner of which received a cake. The child, frustrated at losing to the other boys, eventually learned to run faster than them in order to claim his prize.

Thus, in contrast to Fénelon, Locke and Andry, Rousseau's educational advice was not directed at the gentleman or the ruler. In *Émile*, good health replaced noble blood as the sole criterion for selecting a suitable pupil. Rousseau's role model was the savage, not the prince. His admiration for the 'natural' man was in direct contrast to Andry who regarded the peasant's body, with its 'la mine basse et rampante', to be incomparable with that of the noble.<sup>87</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Audience for *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile***

The work of Rousseau and Tissot served to encourage a new target audience for health advice - the urban elite. Tissot's *Avis au Peuple* was written for the benefit of the rural poor, but became a best-seller, arguably because of the author's constant cross-referencing between rural and urban life. *Émile*, whilst it was written for consumption of the well-to-do members of the public sphere, was highly critical of what its author termed the 'fashion' for health obsession. However, as we have already seen, Rousseau in fact encouraged this obsession through his insistence upon

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<sup>86</sup> Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 150.

<sup>87</sup> Andry, *Orthopédie*, vol. 2, p. 29.

the virtue of health.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, in promoting health as a ‘natural’ virtue, he cemented its status as a bankable commodity within the public sphere.

Rousseau and Tissot also claimed another audience for their writings; namely, the medical community. The purported audience for *Avis au Peuple* and *Emile* did not include physicians, yet both texts were taken up by health writers.<sup>89</sup> As has been noted, historians have not generally associated Rousseau with influencing medical practice. A self-styled enlightened physician, Tissot’s authority amongst his fellow authors of health manuals is more understandable than that of Rousseau; the ardent anti-intellectual who was critical of the efficacy of the medical art. Yet, Rousseau attracted immediate attention from health writers, in the form of both admiration and condemnation.

Tissot viewed Rousseau as a key medical influence. He wrote to the philosopher soon after their meeting in 1762: ‘Je m’enrichirai de vos observations, et J’apprendrai de vous le seul art utile en médecine, celui d’observer’. He noted the proximity of their stance on medicine; ‘nous pensons presque de meme sur cette Science’.<sup>90</sup> Writing in the same year, Barbeu Dubourg, editor of the *Gazette de Médecine*, also observed the similarity between Rousseau’s medical views and those of prominent physicians from the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris. However, Dubourg viewed Rousseau more as plagiariser, than innovator: ‘Il est vrai qu’il ne cite nulle part les Médecins de Paris, mais il s’accorde parfaitement avec eux dans tous les

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<sup>88</sup> See above, Chapter One, Section ‘A Revolution in Health Literature’.

<sup>89</sup> As we have seen, health writers in the second half of the century tended to be medical men. See above, Chapter one, Section ‘The Health Writers’.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Le docteur Samuel-Auguste André David Tissot à Rousseau’, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1762, letter 1966, *Correspondance Complète*, vol. xi.

points relatifs à l'affermissement de la santé de son Elève'.<sup>91</sup> A member of the public responded to Dubourg in defence of Rousseau in the next edition of the *Gazette*. Monsieur Gobet argued that Rousseau, by educating Émile in such a way, was simply following nature and therefore had no need of the so-called expertise of the *Faculté de Médecine*: 'Il semble aussi que vous voudriez faire croire qu'il s'est servi du Recueil des Theses de la Faculté de Paris pour l'éducation de son élève; comme s'il falloit avoir lû beaucoup pour dire ce qui est naturel'.<sup>92</sup>

From this exchange can be drawn two important issues which were to prove significant for the new hygiene. Firstly, it indicates that Rousseau's name rapidly became synonymous with a natural style of health advice. Although, as Dubourg sought to demonstrate, this did not originate from the philosopher, *Émile* reached a far wider audience and therefore had a greater influence than a medical thesis ever could. Secondly, it highlights the conflict in reformed health literature between the assertion that nature was her own physician and the notion that only the physician was qualified to interpret nature. As I shall argue, the medical community sought to seize authority over matters pertaining to the maintenance of health.

The idealization of nature, present in *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile*, was developed by later health writers. They called upon the wealthy elite to improve themselves through physical reform. Exercise was a central feature in the drive towards a more dynamic model of the body. However, as we shall see, there was no expectation that the opulent should *live* as peasants in order to achieve a healthier state. Instead, they were urged to incorporate a simpler way of life within an urban

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<sup>91</sup> 'Suite des Réflexions sur ce qu'il a plu à J. J. Rousseau de dire des Médecins', *Gazette de Médecine*, 23 June 1762, p. 395.

<sup>92</sup> 'Lettre à l'Auteur de cette Gazette', *Gazette de Médecine*, Wednesday 7 July 1762, p. 13.



existence. In short, a 'natural' education was deemed to be achievable within the context of a controlled urban environment.

## Chapter Three

### *The New Hygiene*

‘De toutes les choses qui peuvent être utiles au corps humain, il n’en est aucune qui le soit autant et aussi généralement, que l’exercice’ (Jean André Venel, 1776)<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The pursuit of physical well-being was a central Enlightenment concern. The increasing public interest in the topic was stimulated by the work of Rousseau and Tissot, which promoted and popularised natural health advice. However, the art of conserving health was an ancient one. Hygiene was the classical study of the effect of external influences on the body. This model dominated eighteenth-century discussions of health.

At the heart of Classical medicine was humoral theory. Although challenged by new understandings of the workings of the body in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, this doctrine provided an amazingly enduring and flexible framework for the understanding of health and disease which persisted into the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In humoralism, health was defined as the equilibrium of the four humours, or secretions within the body. These were blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. The balance of the humours was not identical in everyone. Their particular make up was dependent upon a person’s temperament, whether it be bilious, melancholic, phlegmatic or sanguine. However, when the humours became

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-André Venel, *Essai sur la santé et sur l’éducation médicale des filles destinées au mariage* (Yverdon, 1776), p. 143.

abnormally imbalanced, illness occurred. Health could be restored through allopathic treatments such as bleeding and purging and internal imbalance could be prevented through the careful use of factors external to the body, such as the intake of food. Knowledge concerning the conservation of health (balance) formed the study of hygiene.

It was this aspect of Classical medical training that had the greatest structural influence upon the health information published in the eighteenth century. Having been largely absent in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Galenism, hygiene was re-incorporated into the medical curriculum in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Hygiene, or the art of conserving health, was the study of the use and abuse of external influences upon the body, known as the six non-naturals. These were air, food and drink, motion and rest, sleep and waking, retentions and evacuations and the passions of the soul. If managed properly through the correct régime, the non-naturals were believed to prevent the contra-naturals (diseases) from attacking the naturals (bodily functions).<sup>4</sup> Hygiene was essentially the study of disease prevention, a study which led the physician to look outside of the body for the cause of disease. In 1762, Barbeau Dubourg, writing in the *Gazette de Médecine*, provided his readers with a simplified explanation of the non-naturals:

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<sup>2</sup> For an account of Hippocratic humoral theory, see V. Nutton, 'Medicine in the Greek World, 800-50BC', in Lawrence I Conrad, M. Neve et. al, *The Western Medical Tradition 800BC to AD1800* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 11-39.

<sup>3</sup> L. W. B. Brockliss, *French Higher Education in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. A Cultural History* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 391-432.

<sup>4</sup> Although commonly referred to as the Galenic non-naturals, the Roman physician and author of the astoundingly influential synthesis of the Hippocratic corpus did not systematise the theory of the external influences on bodily health which impacted on humoral balance. This was done by Galen's Arabic interpreters. The influences were only named the non-naturals when the Arabic commentary was translated into Latin. See Vivian Nutton, 'Humoralism', in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* vol. 1 (London, 1993), pp. 281-91. For an



Hâtons-nous de prendre un langage plus familier au commun de nos lecteurs: cette partie de la Médecine, qui traite si spécialement du maintien de la santé, et que l'on appelle Hygiène, a pour objet le bon ou mauvais usage des choses qui, n'étant ni de l'essence du corps, ni contraires à sa nature, peuvent lui être utiles ou nuisibles, suivant la manière d'en user, et que Galien a appellées non-naturelles, pour les distinguer tout à la fois des choses naturelles, et des choses contre nature.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I will argue that the category 'motion and rest' was transformed, largely by physicians, during the second half of the eighteenth century. The new hygiene provided an alternative framework for understanding exercise within which a new dynamic body arose to replace an earlier static model. Exercise had traditionally focused entirely upon humoral balance, and acted as a means of balancing or stabilising what entered and exited the body. Thus, by this definition, it was not designed to leave its trace on the body. In contrast, new ideas about movement concentrated on the idea of exercise as additive. Exercise was believed to add stamina and vigour to the body; it also acted as a moral strengthener. Although excessive movement continued to be deemed harmful, exercise became an activity that should exert the body in a similar way to manual labour. Traditionally, although moderate exercise had been regarded as good for the body, heavy work had been considered detrimental. Consequently, the image of the peasant was one of a deformed body, hunched as a result of manual work. However, by the time of the

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account of the resilience of Galenism as a medical philosophy, see O. Temkin, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> 'Des Choses Non-Naturelles', *Gazette de Médecine*, Saturday 17 April 1762, pp. 241-42.

publication of Rousseau's *Émile* in 1762, the peasant had become a model of health and strength - a symbol of the positive effects of a 'natural' style of life. In the light of discussions surrounding idleness and urban degeneration, exercise was characterised as a useful and worthy activity because it was viewed as one of the ways in which the urban elite could replicate the good health of the peasant. Thus, a revitalised theory of hygiene was used within health literature as a tool to encourage social and moral improvement.

Authors of the 'reformed' health advice did not present a uniform picture of disease prevention. Nevertheless, writings reflected a shared understanding of health and exercise, and the power of physical and moral education to re-shape citizens in the face of a corrupting degenerative luxury provided much of the rationale for the self-help health guide. Central to this reformed health literature were the *gens du monde*, or fashionable people. This section of urban society was widely believed to be the most in need of health advice and physical reform. They were seen to be wilfully idle people who ran to physicians for remedies but made no attempt to moderate their corrupt style of life. Exercise was promoted as a force which could combat their physical degeneration, believed to be caused through inactivity. Like the domestic animal which was rendered physically weak by captivity and unrecognisable alongside its wild counterpart, the urban elite were seen to have degenerated through their style of life to become effeminate creatures, useless to themselves and their country. Exercise offered a pertinent example of the body's ability to be either weak (useless) or strong (useful), depending upon education. Discussions of hygiene challenged accepted hierarchies within French society, and imposed a new 'natural' order in which the leisured elite did not fare well.

## **The Neglect of the Galenic Non-Naturals**

Eighteenth-century discussions of health were invariably structured around the Galenic non-naturals. This presents a problem for more recent accounts of early modern medicine, which chart the decline of a Galenic model and the rise of what has been termed ‘neo-Hippocratic environmental medicine’.<sup>6</sup> The ‘new medical history’ has turned away from a traditional story of linear progress which placed figures such as Galen as ultimate ‘losers’ in the story of modern medicine.<sup>7</sup> Yet, James Riley’s account of the rise of environmental medicine has also effectively ousted Galen as a crucial medical figure in the second half of the eighteenth century. I want to suggest that the argument for the breakdown of a Galenic model of medicine is too generalised and that this study of hygiene and exercise indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of the medical world of eighteenth-century France.

Riley’s argument, that the cause of disease was seen to shift from one of disorder within man to one of disorder between man and his environment, whilst extremely persuasive, fails to take into account the continued importance of the individual’s responsibility for his or her own health. Although the new Hippocratic medicine brought an optimism that man could alter his environment in order to promote good health, there also existed the belief that man could perfect himself through altering his pattern of behaviour. He was no longer seen to be a slave to his temperament but could be master of it through the use of the non-naturals.

Thus, despite the fact that traditional humoral medicine was undoubtedly being abandoned in favour of new medical doctrines, as Elizabeth Williams contends



in her examination of vitalism, scant attention has been paid to the importance of tradition as a powerful force in medical understanding.<sup>8</sup> The eighteenth century may have witnessed the broad decline of Classical ‘book’ medicine and the rise of empiricism, but to paint this picture exclusively is to obscure the more complex world of medical advice. The Galenic non-naturals continued to be a powerful means of explaining how the body could preserve itself from disease.

Although in recent years there has been an increased interest in preventive medicine, the non-naturals are a neglected phenomenon in medical history.<sup>9</sup> The ways in which they were theoretised, explained and used by medical writers has been seldom explored. In addition to being hidden by a trajectory of the decline of Galenism, the importance of the non-naturals to eighteenth-century medical theory has also been sidelined by discussions of the invention of modern hygiene, with its narrower definition of cleanliness. Whilst new initiatives in public health did take place towards the end of the *Ancien Régime*, this did not preclude a continued understanding of hygiene in its Classical sense of preventive medicine.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the tendency to reduce them to the examination of either food or air obscures the function of the *six* non-naturals within concepts of disease prevention.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, J. C. Riley, *The Eighteenth-Century Campaign to Avoid Disease* (London, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> See above, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth A. Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the importance of examining preventive medicine, see G. Smith, ‘Prescribing the rules of health: Self-help and advice in the late eighteenth century’ in R. Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 249-282.

<sup>10</sup> For an account of the different meanings of hygiene, see A. Wear, ‘The History of Personal Hygiene’, in W. F. Bynum and R. Porter, *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, vol. 1 (London, 1993), p. 1283-1309.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Lawrence Brockliss argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, food was regarded as the most important non-natural, whereas in the eighteenth century air was considered the most important external influence on health, largely because of the rise of environmentalism and contagion theory. See L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997), p. 411.

Yet, as I argue, an examination of the non-naturals is clearly of importance, not only to an understanding of medical culture in late eighteenth-century France, but also to a far wider set of social concerns. Therefore, the treatment of these phenomena by William Coleman and Antoinette Emch-Dériaz are welcome exceptions in this neglected area of enquiry.<sup>12</sup>

Coleman's article on health and hygiene in the *Encyclopédie* aims to place the use of the non-naturals within their social context. His work explores the socio-economic implications of the continued and increased interest in the non-naturals in the closing years of the *Ancien Régime*. Coleman argues that their popularity was not merely indicative of the persistence of an ancient medical doctrine. Rather, the 'six things non-natural' provided an expanding wealthy minority with an individualistic mode of living which fitted into a new, largely secular, moral code, which Coleman loosely terms 'bourgeois'. Whilst his account of a new secular health which promised happiness in the physical world is insightful, his sharp separation between private health (*Ancien Régime*) and public health (Revolution) is problematic. Coleman's analysis of hygiene in the *Encyclopédie* presents a model of the non-naturals which remained unchanged until the public health initiatives of the French Revolution. However, an examination of health writing from the 1760s reveals that although many of the issues raised in the *Encyclopédie* remained current, there were significant changes in attitudes towards health prior to 1789. Published in instalments between 1751 and 1765, the *Encyclopédie* itself did not offer a static or

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<sup>12</sup> See W. Coleman, 'Health and Hygiene in the *Encyclopédie*: A Medical Doctrine for the Bourgeoisie', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* (1974), vol. xxix, pp. 399-431, and A. Emch-Dériaz, *Tissot: Physician of the Enlightenment* (New York, 1992) and 'The Non-Naturals Made Easy' in R. Porter (ed.), *The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850* (London, 1992), pp. 134-59.

uniform view of health. Written by different authors, accounts of exercise shifted in their focus with changed social concerns. The increased potency of discussions of luxury and degeneration was reflected in the later articles on health.<sup>13</sup>

Coleman regards the non-naturals in the eighteenth century to be the domain of the patient, a means by which one could be master of his or her own health. However, this account ignores the extent to which the physician actually took control of the use of the non-naturals during the middle of the century and fashioned himself as the irreplaceable interpreter of régime. Although ‘self-help’ was the buzz-word of the medical entries in the *Encyclopédie*, and the medical profession was criticised for neglecting the art of hygiene, the physician also emerged from the *Encyclopédie* as the hygienic expert, to whom all questions regarding the non-naturals should be addressed.

Emch-Dériaz, in her treatment of hygiene, presents the non-naturals as a structural device, used by physicians such as Tissot solely to discuss health and medicine in a manner that could be understood by an expanding lay audience. Thus, according to this account, by the time that Tissot’s *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé* was published in 1761, the non-naturals no longer formed a meaningful part of ‘professional’ medicine. Aside from falling victim to the limitations of imposing a dichotomy of professional and popular knowledge onto the eighteenth-century medical world, this account does not do justice to the continued importance of the non-naturals to a framework for understanding the body.

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<sup>13</sup> My aim is not to chart precise changes in discussions of health within the *Encyclopédie*, particularly as the date of publication of articles did not necessarily indicate the order in which they were written. However, as will be discussed, there are notable differences in tone between D’Aumont’s ‘Exercice’ (1756) and Jaucourt’s ‘Gymnastique’ (1765).



As we have seen, a revolution in health education was discussed by medical authors.<sup>14</sup> Classical hygiene was revitalised by eighteenth-century concerns and the non-naturals were explored and developed by health writers. Although the use of the non-naturals as an organising structure was not questioned, they were viewed as a dynamic category; a meaningful explanation of health and disease. They were not regarded as outmoded devices, used simply to appeal to a lay-readership, but were integral parts of a new theory of hygiene which was championed by physicians.

### **Hygiene in the *Encyclopédie***

The *Encyclopédie* will be used as a starting point to explore eighteenth-century perceptions of terms such as ‘hygiene’, ‘régime’, ‘choses non-naturelles’ and ‘mouvement et repos’. The medical entries provide a distillation of what *exercice* meant to both the physician and the educated lay-reader and form a sophisticated network of interconnecting information about the body. The great majority of the articles on health were written by the Chevalier de Jaucourt (1704-1780) who was the most prolific contributor to the *Encyclopédie*. With the help of several personal secretaries, he completed around 17,000 of the 44,632 main articles of which the whole oeuvre was composed. The son of a Burgundian nobleman, he was born in Paris and brought up secretly as a Protestant. Educated in Protestant countries under the assumed name of Louis de Neufville, he studied in Geneva, in England at Cambridge and then went to Leyden where he studied with Boerhaave and completed his doctorate in medicine before returning to France. He never practised,

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<sup>14</sup> See above, Chapter One, Section ‘A Revolution in Health Literature’.

but began a career as a professional scholar in Paris.<sup>15</sup> He was the jobbing hack without whom the *Encyclopédie* would never have been written. Arnulphe d'Aumont (1721-1800) was also a main contributor on medicine. A physician from Montpellier, he became Professor of Medicine at the University of Valence.<sup>16</sup>

The *Encyclopédie* set the agenda for later writing on health and exercise. The medical definitions, explanations and histories offered within were repackaged in various guises throughout the second half of the century.<sup>17</sup> The numerous medical entries contained within the *Encyclopédie* highlight the status accorded to health in the mid-eighteenth century and offer a summary of accepted knowledge of the body. Furthermore, the frequent use of cross-referencing by the editors between individual articles confirms the proximity of debates on health, the non-naturals, exercise, idleness and luxury.<sup>18</sup>

The *Encyclopédie* did not, on the whole, offer a 'new' version of preventive medicine, but drew on established Classical models. However, this framework did not preclude the incorporation of modern medical theory where particular authors saw fit. In short, the articles contained in the *Encyclopédie* relative to physical health were a product of the medical environment in which they were conceived. Although eighteenth-century medical training was based upon the personal medical treatises of lecturers, rather than the 'textually orientated' commentaries on Galen and

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<sup>15</sup> Frank A. Kafker and Serena L. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as Individuals: a Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 175-80.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> To cite just one example, Amoret Doppet copied the *Encyclopédie*'s discussion of the history of medical gymnastics in his *Le Médecin philosophe, ouvrage utile à tout citoyen, dans lequel on trouve une nouvelle manière de guérir, puisée dans les affections de l'ame, et la gymnastique* (Turin, 1787).

<sup>18</sup> William Coleman also refers to the cross-referencing in the *Encyclopédie* which he argues 'intimately linked' the articles on health. See Coleman, 'Health and Hygiene in the *Encyclopédie*'. My own cross-referencing of the *Encyclopédie* has been helped greatly by the use of the University of Chicago's ARTFL project, which has produced a CD-rom of the entire text.

Hippocrates which marked education in the seventeenth century, medical degrees were still essentially traditional at the end of the *Ancien Régime*. Physicians left their training with a greater knowledge of Classical medicine than of actual patient care.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Classical inheritance which dominated medical understanding is reflected within the *Encyclopédie*.

Articles such as 'Hygiene' (1765) and 'Régime' (1765) were taken broadly from the medical writings of Antiquity. However, they did not ignore the Moderns, particularly those who refined Hippocrates, such as Hoffman ('l'Hippocrate allemand'), whose seven rules of health were quoted in full in the article 'Hygiene'. Individual authors used the *Encyclopédie* as a forum to promote their medical interests. For example, the Chevalier de Jaucourt's medical training in Leiden was reflected in his frequent use of Boerhaave. A Dutch and German influence filtered from the *Encyclopédie* into later works on health. However, the Ancients were still generally regarded to be the authorities on health preservation. As d'Aumont, the author of the article 'Hygiene', commented:

On est, à cet égard, comme à bien d'autres, plus redevable aux anciens qu'aux modernes, dont ceux qui ont donné les meilleurs traités d'Hygiene, n'ont fait que commenter ce qui leur avoit été transmis sur cette matiere par les Grecs et les Romains.<sup>20</sup>

Within the *Encyclopédie*, the conservation of health, or hygiene, was generally depicted as the most useful but neglected part of medicine:

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<sup>19</sup> Brockliss, *French Higher Education*, p. 391.

<sup>20</sup> D'Aumont, 'Hygiene', in Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772), vol. 8, p. 387.



Ainsi la partie de la science medicinale qui peut être la plus avantageuse au genre humain, est donc sans contredit l'Hygiene, en tant qu'elle a pour objet la durée de la vie saine, le bien de ce monde, qu'il importe le plus de conserver, qui est le plus facile à perdre, et le plus difficile à recouvrer.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, through the mechanism of the *Encyclopédie*, knowledge of hygiene was being 'restored' to an eighteenth-century audience.

Health was regarded to be the ultimate goal in life. However, it was considered to be very difficult to achieve, not least because it was regarded to be a highly individual state: 'La santé ne consiste donc pas dans un point précis de perfection commune à tous les sujets'.<sup>22</sup> Good health was largely indefinable; an uncertain goal which varied from subject to subject. Whilst the most desirable aim in life, health was considered difficult to measure and quantify. Nevertheless, there were certain tangible signs which indicated physical well-being. One of these was the ability to sustain a vigorous exercise without any detrimental effects on the body (such as palpitations or redness of the skin). Although each régime needed to be moderated according to constitution, temperament, age, sex, profession, estate, climate and habitat, it was agreed with certainty that, 'les moyens propres à conserver la santé, consistent dans le bon usage des choses non-naturelles'.<sup>23</sup>

The terminology of the six non-naturals was continually debated by eighteenth-century medical writers. As the author of the article thereon in the *Encyclopédie* explained: 'c'est un terme de Médecine assez impropre, mais reçu sur

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>22</sup> 'Santé', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 14, p. 629.

<sup>23</sup> 'Hygiene', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 8, p. 388.

tout dans les écoles, qui demande toujours un commentaire pour être entendu'.<sup>24</sup> The non-naturals were regarded as being in need of further explanation and opinion was divided as to their exact definition. In the *Gazette de Médecine* in 1762, Barbeu Dubourg discussed the fact that the non-naturals were a contested item of Classical information.<sup>25</sup> There was debate as to what they should be called - 'les six instrumens de la vie', or '(les) six choses *nécessaires* à l'homme, appelées vulgairement les six choses *non-naturelles*', and how many of them there should be – Boerhaave used four, Pitcairn, two, Gabriel Venel of the Montpellier school, seven.

Thus, the doctrine of the non-naturals was not static in eighteenth-century France. It was being manipulated, renamed and repackaged. However, the basic premise of the doctrine remained - that factors outside of the body could be used and abused, either to maintain health or to encourage disorder and disease. In eighteenth-century France, physical exercise tended to be conceptualized in terms of the non-natural 'movement and rest' and as such, its use was viewed as vital to the conservation of health.

### ***Mouvement et Repos in the Encyclopédie***

Within the *Encyclopédie*, exercise was defined as a medical term. Both the articles 'Exercice' (1756) and 'Mouvement' (1765) treated exercise in terms of the part it could play in the conservation of health. Articles on specific activities such as horse-riding, swimming and walking were also concerned with their health-giving properties. For example, d'Aumont's article 'Du Cheval' discussed Sydenham's

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<sup>24</sup> 'Non-naturelles, choses', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, p. 217.

<sup>25</sup> 'Des Choses Non-Naturelles', *Gazette de Médecine*, Saturday 17 April 1762, pp. 241-42.

advocacy of horse-riding for the conservation of health and the cure of chronic diseases.

D'Aumont's article 'Exercice' presented a definition of exercise which was broadly Classical. He highlighted that it was the Ancients who were the first to discover that exercise could be useful or harmful to the body and that this knowledge had been developed in the art of medical gymnastics and systematised as one of the non-naturals in the practice of hygiene. D'Aumont offered a description of exercise which derived essentially from an established Galenic model but which nevertheless incorporated more recent scholarship on hygiene by figures such as Cheyne, Hoffman and Boerhaave. However, he did not deviate from the Classical definition of 'movement and rest' as a means to maintain equilibrium within the body. D'Aumont set out the 'rules' of exercise which would be used continually by later health writers.

In his article, D'Aumont described the traditional tripartite vision of exercise. According to this model, there were three different types of movement; 'les uns sont actifs, d'autres sont purement passifs, et d'autres mixtes'.<sup>26</sup> The first was produced entirely by the movement of the individual. Actions which placed the whole body in motion included tennis, badminton, billiards, bowls, hunting, fencing and jumping. Other activities such as walking and running primarily exercised the lower extremities, whilst rowing or playing a musical instrument such as the violin exercised the upper body. Additionally, talking, singing and the playing of wind instruments exercised the lungs. Passive exercise was produced by the motion of something other than the body, such as a cradle, the movement of a baby in the



womb or various different carriages or boats. Finally, 'mixed' exercise was a combination of active and passive movement and was produced both by the body itself and the mechanism by which it was supported. This category included swinging and horse-riding.

The three types of movement were not suitable for everyone. Active exercise was the preserve of healthy people whilst the passive suited the weak, and young children. Mixed exercise was considered appropriate for 'les personnes languissantes' who, although not strong, were able to place their body in action and increase their strength by degrees.<sup>27</sup> Thus, according to the model presented by D'Aumont, exercise needed to be moderated to suit the individual. However, certain general precepts did apply. Exercise was more effective in the morning, before food and in the open air. Most importantly, the participant had to derive enjoyment from the activity. Exercise was to be continued until the skin began to swell, change colour and perspire. As soon as these signs became evident, then the person exercising should rest. D'Aumont was at pains to stress the potential dangers of movement. Like all the non-naturals, exercise could be equally harmful or helpful to the maintenance of a healthy body.

D'Aumont presented exercise as an activity that would hasten old age and therefore always needed to be used with care. Within humoral theory, exercise, whether excessive or not, was seen to 'wear out' the humours. According to this view, the peasant working in his field would eventually exhaust himself through labour. In this way, exercise was characterised by d'Aumont in traditional Galenic

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<sup>26</sup> D'Aumont, 'Exercice', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6, p. 245.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

terms as a potentially beneficial activity, distinct from work which was necessarily harmful to the body:

On restreint cependant la signification d'exercice en général, à exprimer l'action du corps à laquelle on se livre volontairement et sans une nécessité absolue, pour la distinguer du travail, qui est le plus souvent une action du corps à laquelle on se porte avec peine, qui nuit à la santé et qui accélère le cours de la vie, par l'excès qui en est souvent inséparable.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst he defined it as an essentially moderate activity, D'Aumont did present exercise as a powerful means of achieving health and of transforming an individual's capacity for strength and fitness. He recalled the story of two brothers who had the same constitution, but who embraced completely opposing styles of life; one entirely sedentary, the other constantly active:

Quelles différence n'observe-t-on pas entre ces deux freres? Celui-ci est extrêmement robuste, résiste aux injures de l'air, supporte impunément la faim, la soif, les fatigues les plus fortes, sans que sa santé en souffre aucune altération; il est fort comme un Hercule: le premier au contraire est d'un tempérament très-foible, d'une santé toûjours chancelante, qui succombe aux moindres peines de corps ou d'esprit; il devient malade à tous changemens de saison, de la température de l'air même: c'est un homme aussi délicat qu'une jeune fille valétudinaire. Cette différence

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

dépend absolument de l'habitude contractée pour le mouvement dans l'un, et pour le repos dans l'autre.<sup>29</sup>

With this anecdote, D'Aumont highlighted the impact that exercise alone could exert on the body and in so doing, asserted the direct correlation between style of life and state of health. The constitution of the brothers did not secure their health; it had to be earned through exercise.

Although d'Aumont's Classical structure for understanding exercise was, to a certain extent, maintained by later health writers, discernible shifts did take place in perceptions of bodily movement in the second half of the century. As we shall see, the categories of exercise and work, distinct in d'Aumont's account, were merged in later discussions of movement. Furthermore, d'Aumont did not exert a moral pressure on his readers to exercise - a ubiquitous feature of later literature. However, d'Aumont's assertion that a person's natal status had little bearing on their capacity to obtain health in adulthood was to hold increasing significance for writers in the second half of the century.

### **The Physician as Nature's Interpreter**

The *Encyclopédie* professed to render useful knowledge accessible to the general reader, thereby furnishing him or her with the means to pursue self-enlightenment. However, the ability to interpret one's own body, whilst important to the formulation of a successful régime, was not considered an adequate replacement for the health expert. Coleman argues that within the *Encyclopédie*, articles such as 'Hygiene' both admonished physicians for neglecting the art of hygiene, and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 245.



encouraged individuals to tend to their own health.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, they also emphasised the dangers of following an unsupervised régime. Unlike animals who, it was argued, naturally heeded a way of life which promoted their health, humans needed more guidance: ‘L’instinct qui semble diriger si sûrement les animaux en les portant à ce qui leur est utile, .....n’est pas un guide aussi infallible pour l’homme’.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it was necessary to endorse a science to distinguish between what was useful or harmful for the body: ‘Ainsi ces considérations établissent la nécessité d’une science qui prescrire à l’entendement des regles, pour distinguer ce qui est utile ou ce qui est nuisible à l’économie animale’.<sup>32</sup> Thus, although a hygienic régime used ‘nature’ as its cure, nature needed to be interpreted by experts:

il est toujours plus sûr, pour les personnes qui veulent ou qui doivent par état régler tout ce qui a rapport à leur santé et à la prolongation de leur vie, d’avoir recours aux conseils de ceux qui se dévouent spécialement à acquérir les connoissances necessaires à cet égard, et qui jouissent de la réputation bien fondée de les posséder<sup>33</sup>

The physician promoted himself as nature’s interpreter, and fought back against claims made in certain sections of the *Encyclopédie* that doctors neglected preventive medicine in favour of expensive and complicated remedies. As Pressavin commented in his *L’art de Prolonger la Vie et de Conserver la Santé*: ‘Aussi tous les vrais médecins....savent respecter la Nature dans ses opérations, et la regardant

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<sup>30</sup> Coleman, ‘Health and Hygiene in the *Encyclopédie*’.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Non-naturelles, choses’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, 218. Similar claims were made in relation to food, where critics of the *nouvelle cuisine* claimed that civilized man no longer instinctively knew which foods were good or bad for him. See Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant* (Cambridge Mass., 2000), pp. 50-51.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Non-naturelles choses’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, p. 218.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

comme leur premier maître, sous la direction duquel ils doivent toujours docilement agir, ils se contentent de la secourir sans la contrarier'.<sup>34</sup>

A distinction was made between the *true* physician who always worked as nature's assistant to formulate a cure, and the charlatan who would recommend unnecessary remedies for commercial gain. Hygiene was viewed as a particularly natural form of medicine and as such, it had a greater moral worth. As the Turin-trained physician, François-Amédée Doppet (1732-1812) later commented in his *Le Médecin Philosophe*: 'La Nature est toujours notre guide'.<sup>35</sup> Hygiene was thus used for political ends and taken up in debates concerning the role and status of the physician. The elevated position of natural medicine is perhaps indicative of why a succession of young (often Paris-trained) physicians published on hygiene, thereby showing their authority as legitimate medical experts.

Later in the century, the blame for the neglect of hygiene was laid at the door of the patient. In a review of Pressavin's *L'Art de Prolonger la Vie et de Conserver la Santé*, contained in the *Journal Encyclopédique* in 1787, it was claimed that the precepts of hygiene were ignored by patients: 'On court aux médecins pour réparer une constitution que l'on a délabrée par mille excès, et on s'obstine à ignorer qu'il est un art plus précieux que celui de guérir, puisqu'il met en état de s'en passer. Cet art est l'hygiène, dont notre auteur développe les préceptes et les avantages'.<sup>36</sup> In their bid to establish themselves as the true servants of nature, physicians bemoaned the unwillingness of patients to be cured by natural means. Jourdain, in his *Le*

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Baptiste Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger la vie et de conserver la santé* (Lyon, 1786), p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> Doppet, *Le Médecin philosophe*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Journal Encyclopédique ou Universel*, 15 February 1787, p. 4.

*Médecin des Hommes*, referred to the impatience of the public with regard to natural remedies:

C'est une mode générale que de crier contre un médecin qui ne guérit pas son malade promptement. Rien de plus juste que de vouloir jouir d'une bonne santé; mais aussi rien n'est plus injuste que de refuser à un médecin le tems convenable de rendre à la nature, par les secours qu'on lui porte, toute son harmonie.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, cure by exercise often had to be disguised, so disagreeable a remedy was it amongst the *gens du monde*. Jacquin, in his *De la Santé*, recited the tale of the court surgeon and physician Jacques Dumoulin (1663-1755), who tricked back into health a woman of 'première qualité'. Dumoulin gave the woman pills for her malaise, on the condition that she rose every day between six and seven in the morning and took three hours of exercise (horse-riding or billiards). Six weeks later the woman was cured, and praised her physician for the efficacy of his pills, 'mais Dumoulin eut la bonne foi de lui avouer que c'étoit à l'exercice qu'elle devoit sa santé, et non pas aux pilules, qui étoient simplement composées de mie de pain'.<sup>38</sup> Jacquin's recounting of this anecdote does not simply indicate the time-honoured prerogative of the physician to employ the placebo effect. The patient's inability to recognise the utility of the non-naturals also confirmed the necessity of the physician's supervision of their use.

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<sup>37</sup> Jourdain, *Le Médecin des hommes, depuis la puberté jusqu'à l'extrême vieillesse* (Paris, 1772), pp. 34-35.

<sup>38</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé: ouvrage utile à tout le monde* (Paris, 1762), p. 241. The review of Jacquin in the *Journal des Scavans* also quotes Jacquin's discussion of Dumoulin, *Journal des Scavans, combiné avec les Mémoires de Trévoux*, volume 74, March 1763, p. 131.



Following the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, the non-naturals were increasingly used by physicians as a tool in their expanding role as social commentators.<sup>39</sup> Far from being an expression of a wealthy elite's radical individualism, the non-naturals in fact provided a means to criticise the existence of this same elite. Discussions of personal health were part of the public domain in the second half of the eighteenth century, as fears surrounding depopulation ensured that the health of every citizen was of social importance.

### **The Non-Naturals as a Gauge of Virtue**

As we have seen, health and strength were central to Rousseau's concept of virtue. Subsequent health literature concurred with a definition of health based upon moral worth.<sup>40</sup> Rousseau wrote in the first book of *Émile*: 'La seule partie utile de la médecine est l'hygiène; encore l'hygiène est-elle moins une science qu'une vertu'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, he defined the preservation of health and the régime necessary to implement this as virtuous behaviour. Christian doctrine had long associated sin with sickness, yet the virtue of health in the new health literature was secular in tone.<sup>42</sup> As Coleman argues, the non-naturals fitted into a new temporal order based upon the laws of nature. Health and happiness were seen to be possible in this life, through the use of hygiene.

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<sup>39</sup> See above, 'Introduction', Section 'The Negotiation of Medical Authority'. For the role of physician as social commentator, see N. R. Gelbart, 'The French Revolution as Medical Event: The Journalistic Gaze', *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989), pp. 417-27.

<sup>40</sup> See above, Chapter One, Section 'A Revolution in Health Literature' and Chapter Two, Section 'Conclusion: the audience for *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile*'.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou de l'Éducation*, François et Pierre Richards (eds.) (Paris, 1964), p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> On the relationship between sin and sickness, see Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990), 'Christianity and Medicine', pp. 7-13.

Within his discussions of health in the 1780s, Pinel referred to Rousseau's commentary on hygiene.<sup>43</sup> Pinel argued, in contrast to Rousseau, that hygiene should be both a science and a virtue. Science was needed to formulate its rules and virtue was required to follow them. Thus, he associated the correct use of the non-naturals with individual virtue, while at the same time asserting the necessity of 'expert' control over the rules of hygiene. In this way, the non-naturals acted as a gauge of social worth. They were a means by which the individual could reform him or herself, yet they were also used by physicians to make judgements about people's worth within society. This was seen clearly in Tissot's *Essai sur les Maladies des Gens du Monde* (1770), where the author used the non-naturals to indicate a sliding scale of health from the peasant at the upper end to the leisured elite at the lower.

Tissot used the labourer as a measure of good health by which to compare the *gens du monde*. He illustrated the ways in which the labourer used the non-naturals to promote health whilst the opulent abused the non-naturals and fell prey to disease. If the labourer did misuse a non-natural, 'ce n'est jamais que il se trouve au service du riche et qu'il est la victime de irregularités de son genre de vie'.<sup>44</sup> Developing his belief in the essential healthiness of rural people, as present in *Avis au Peuple*, Tissot used the labourer in his later work to stand for Rousseau's 'natural' man. The labourer as the subject of health advice had disappeared. He now appeared solely as a model of health.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Hygiene', *Gazette de Santé*, No. 51 (1788), pp. 201-2.

<sup>44</sup> S.A.D. Tissot, *Essai sur les Maladies des Gens du Monde* (Lausanne, 1770), pp. 43-44.

In contrast, according to Tissot, the physical state of the *gens du monde* had degenerated as a direct consequence of urban luxury:

L'éloignement de cette vie simple augmente encore dans l'ordre supérieur des Bourgeois, et leur santé diminue en proportion; ils offrent déjà beaucoup de maux inconnus dans les campagnes: enfin il est le plus possible chez les gens du monde, classe dans laquelle il faut comprendre, quand on l'envisage relativement à la santé, toutes les personnes qui, sans être du même rang, menent le même genre de vie: ce genre de vie, qui n'a point d'oeuvre de vocation, et dont les distractions continuelles sont la base, qui a été introduire et perpétué par des gens oisifs, qui pour tromper l'ennui insupportable d'une existence désœuvrée, ont voulu remplir la plûpart de leurs momens par les plaisirs.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the increased desires of fashionable people, fuelled by a more complicated existence, were the source of their unhappiness and a cause of ill-health. Constantly comparing their fortune with that of others, the health of the *gens du monde* could be destroyed through mere exposure to a change of circumstance. Their way of living increased sensitivity to changes in atmosphere, resulting in headaches, pimples, stomach disorders, tearfulness, gout, lung problems and nervous disorders.

The use of the non-naturals as a yardstick by which to determine social worth challenged traditional hierarchies within Ancien Régime society. Those of high birth tended to be placed at the bottom of a scale which measured a 'natural' style of life.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>46</sup> Emch Dériaz argues that the non-naturals were 'recast...to fit the 'natural' mould'. See her article 'The Non-Naturals Made Easy', p. 138.



As Jean-Baptiste-Timothée Baumès (1756-1828), a Montpellier physician, commented in 1783 with reference to the sedentary life of the wealthy: ‘dans cet etat qu’on a decoré du nom de premier et qui est le dernier dans d’ordre de la nature, dispensés de tout travail par les faveurs de la fortune, les hommes ainsi que les femmes ne l’amusent qu’a des jeux qui, sans exercer le corps, tendent l’esprit et animent les passions’.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Jacquin, in his *De la Santé*, argued that rich women abused the laws of nature and this was reflected in their own health and the health of their children: ‘Dans la pauvreté, les loix de la Nature sont respectées, suivies; et l’enfant et la mère jouissent d’une santé parfaite: dans l’opulence, ces mêmes loix sont méprisées, violées; et la mère et l’enfant languissent.’<sup>48</sup>

The peasant emerged as a model of good health in discussions of the utility of exercise. Jean-Charles Desessartz, in his *Traité de l’Education Corporelle des Enfants*, published in 1760, argued that one did not have to look to the Greeks or Romans or even to the savage to see the importance of exercise to health. All one needed to do was to compare country children with those of the town: ‘quelle énorme différence ne remarquons-nous pas entre les enfans de la campagne, qui sautent et courent dès l’âge de deux ans, et nos enfans des villes, qui à peine peuvent marcher à deux ou trois!’.<sup>49</sup> Healthier and happier than his urban counterpart, the rural worker had ‘un exercice continuel’ to thank for his enviable state.<sup>50</sup>

Jacquin contrasted the happiness of the peasant with the boredom of the rich city dweller:

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<sup>47</sup> Baumès, ‘Memoire sur l’Education physique des enfans pour servir de reponse a la question proposée par la Société Royale de Médecine de Paris dans sa séance publique de mardi onze mars 1783’, p. 132, Archives de Société Royale de Médecine (hereafter SRM) 120d.2, number 1.

<sup>48</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 307.

<sup>49</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l’Éducation corporelle des enfans* (Paris, 1760), p. 397.

Considérons les gens de la campagne: occupés toute la journée à des exercices fatiguants, ils n'en chantent pas moins au milieu de leurs travaux, et se portent bien, tandis que les riches habitants des villes bâillent au centre des plaisirs, et sont accablés d'incommodités.<sup>51</sup>

He argued that although the poor were forced to live frugally and were ignorant of life's commodities, they nevertheless enjoyed a vigorous health. In contrast, 'le riche nage dans l'abondance et dans la mollesse, et à peine jouit-il des plaisirs qui l'environnent, tant il en est rassasié'.<sup>52</sup>

Pressavin also contrasted 'une santé constante' of inhabitants of the country with 'la délicatesse' of 'nos citoyens oisifs'.<sup>53</sup> A modest existence founded upon physical labour, it was argued, was far better for health than the inactivity of the urban elite. Here, the dichotomy between town and country focused upon the proximity of luxury, idleness and illness. Inactivity was seen to breed physical weakness. As Pressavin contended:

L'exercice rendra toujours robuste un sujet né naturellement foible, comme l'oisiveté énervera toujours l'homme naturellement robuste. Que l'on compare l'agilité, la santé et la force de l'animal sauvage, avec celles des animaux domestiques choisis dans la même espece, on trouvera dans la différence de leur tempérament le juste produit des avantages de l'exercice sur l'oisiveté.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 243.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 325-26.

<sup>53</sup> Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger la vie et de conserver la santé: ou traité d'hygiene* (Lyon, 1786), p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger*, p. 144.

The connection between bodily strength and style of life, made by d'Aumont, was taken further in subsequent literature. Health writers asserted that the leisured elite wilfully neglected their health through their indulgent behaviour. In Tissot's opinion, the idle deserved no pity because they did not help themselves: 'elles croient faire beaucoup en se prêtant à prendre quelques remedes, mais elles ne veulent pas déranger la façon de vivre qui les tue'.<sup>55</sup> It was generally argued that this section of society knew perfectly well that exercise was good for them, but that they chose to avoid it or to participate only in forms of exercise that were so mild as to be practically useless (such as riding in a carriage with good suspension), or so passionate as to agitate the body in a harmful way. As Pressavin commented:

Peu de personnes méconnoissent les effets salutaires de l'exercice sur la santé; cependant, sans compter celles qui par état sont forcées à une vie sédentaire, nous en voyons un grand nombre se livrer volontairement à la mollesse, dans laquelle elles trouvent bientôt le principe d'une vie languissante qui les conduit insensiblement au tombeau.<sup>56</sup>

Jacquín went further in his criticism of the idleness of the leisured elite, and explicitly referred to them as a useless burden on society:

Ils ont des pieds, et ne marchent pas; ils ont des mains, et ne travaillent pas; ils ont une tête, et ne réfléchissent pas: Automates végétans, ils languissent au milieu de l'opulence, et surchargent la terre d'un fardeau, dont on ne s'apercevrait pas, sans cet attirail de chevaux, de carosse, de domestiques et de chiens, où se borne leur embarrassante grandeur.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Tissot, *Gens du Monde*, p. xxi.

<sup>56</sup> Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger*, p. 144-45.

<sup>57</sup> Jacquín, *De la Santé*, p. 245.



As we can see, *oisiveté* was a crucial term in discussions of exercise and health; one which was loaded with moral implications. It confirmed the proximity for health writers of social and physical disorder. The *Encyclopédie* article ‘Oisiveté’, written by Jaucourt and published in 1765, began by clarifying the dual meaning of the term: ‘desoeuvrement, fainéantise, ou manque d’occupation utile et honnête; car le mot oisiveté renferme ces deux idées’.<sup>58</sup> Here, the discussion of idleness was split into two sections: the first discussed lack of activity as a social ill; and the second examined it as a medical problem: a source of physical ill.

The article outlined the concept that idleness was contrary to the needs of man and citizen; one ought to work in order to be useful to society. Jaucourt argued in favour of the implementation of laws, similar to those of the Ancients, to guard against inactivity. In Athens, while the lower social orders worked, the rich were kept active by pursuits such as horse-riding and hunting. According to Jaucourt, glory and happiness derived from work, whereas a lazy life was necessarily a sad one: ‘Je demande aux gens riches et désœuvrés si leur état est heureux. L’ennui qui les consume, me prouve bien le contraire’.<sup>59</sup> He maintained that idleness was the source of many illnesses because it thickened the humours and slackened the solids, and produced illnesses such as gout, scurvy, melancholy and mania, in addition to unhappiness and depression in weak and effeminate people.

Thus, in contrast to the traditional account of movement summarised by D’Aumont, later discussions of exercise, influenced chiefly by Rousseau’s account of the necessity of toughening the body, emphasised the physical benefits of a working life. The distinction between the conceptions of work and exercise was

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<sup>58</sup> Jaucourt, ‘Oisivete’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, p. 445.

broken down in the second half of the century as physical ‘fitness’ came to be more closely associated with social utility. As Jourdain argued in 1771: ‘Le travail n’est point une chose abjecte, ni une punition; au contraire, il est un préservatif contre les maladies. L’opulence, la médiocrité et la pauvreté ont chacun des travaux qui peuvent leur convenir’.<sup>60</sup> In the closing years of the *Ancien Régime*, everybody’s body needed to be made useful through increased physical activity.

### **The New Exercise: from Balance to Dynamism**

By the 1760s, ‘movement and rest’ as a category had come to signify far more than simply a means of maintaining the body’s equilibrium. I do not want to suggest that equilibrium in the body was no longer meaningful in late eighteenth-century France. The idea that balance was key to the body in a perfect state of health persisted, as did the understanding of illness as imbalance of the humours. With the decline of allopathic treatments, the non-naturals became the primary means of maintaining balance within the body. However, the role of movement became more dynamic during the course of the century. Differing models of the body offered alternative ways of viewing exercise. Furthermore, discussions surrounding the idleness of the elite altered perceptions of the body in movement and informed criticism of traditional noble pursuits whilst encouraging ‘new’ exercises such as swimming.<sup>61</sup>

Medical theories current in the eighteenth century accorded a high status to movement of (and within) the body. Seventeenth-century medical models such as

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>60</sup> Jourdain, *Le Médecin des dames, ou l’art de les conserver en santé* (Paris, 1771), p. 144.

<sup>61</sup> For the case of swimming in late eighteenth-century France see below, Chapter Seven.

Harvey's theory of the circulation (and pumping) of the blood paved the way for an understanding of the body which privileged movement. Indeed Jacquin, in his *De la Santé* of 1762, argued that although they neglected it, the Moderns were more aware of the importance of exercise to the body than the Ancients, precisely because they had knowledge of the circulation of the blood, of which their forebears were ignorant:

Rien de plus essentiel à la santé que l'exercice: c'est une vérité dont les Anciens devoient être moins persuadés que nous, puisqu'ils ignoroient la circulation du sang; cependant ils la mettoient en pratique avec beaucoup d'exactitude.<sup>62</sup>

The mechanical philosophy of the early part of the eighteenth century, which advocated the precise measuring of influences upon the body, was rendered outmoded by a more organic philosophy which placed the judgement of 'nature' over that of a machine. As the author of the article on Sanctorius' chair (a machine for measuring insensible perspiration) in the *Encyclopédie* stated, in his criticism of the ability of a machine to measure the quantity of food that a person should intake, 'la nature, qui nous trompe à la vérité quelquefois, mais qui est encore plus sûre qu'un instrument de Mécanique'.<sup>63</sup> Thus, 'nature' provided her own balance, without the aid of exact measurement.

Later criticism befell exercise machines which had been popular in the early part of the century, such as the *Fauteuil de Poste* of the controversial promoter of international peace, Abbé de Saint Pierre (1658-1743).<sup>64</sup> Saint Pierre developed a

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<sup>62</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 223.

<sup>63</sup> 'Chaise de Sanctorius', *Encyclopédie*.

<sup>64</sup> Abbé de Saint Pierre, *Observations sur la sobriété* (Paris, 1735).



moving armchair which could replicate the jolts procured by a poste chaise, in the comfort of one's own living room or garden. Thus, the body would receive sufficient movement without causing disruption to the business of the day. However, exercise without effort was no longer deemed to be adequate to the task of maintaining health in the aftermath of Rousseau's *Émile* and certain forms of exercise came under attack by physicians.

The idea that exercise acted simply as a means to moderate what entered and exited the body became problematic. The commentary by the Montpellier physician Jean Astruc (1684-1766) on Saint Pierre's exercise machine, published in 1735, would be dismissed by Pinel fifty years later. Astruc argued that as eating and exercise both maintained equilibrium of the body, they were in effect interchangeable: 'La sobriété, lorsqu'elle est rigoureuse, dispense de l'exercice, et l'exercice lorsqu'il est fort grand, donne la liberté d'être moins exact sur les règles de la sobriété'.<sup>65</sup> Pinel, on the other hand, in his commentary on hygiene in 1784, argued that if the humours were dissipated through fasting rather than through exercise of the limbs or of the voice, then this would result in a lack of vigour. Fasting did not restore the body in a way that exercising and feeding of the natural appetite would.<sup>66</sup> Thus, bodily movement for Pinel signified more than simply a means to balance the humours, and he contended that a decline in exercise in modern times had had a debilitating effect on health.

Pinel argued that people no longer exercised their voices through reading aloud and that they used comfortable carriages instead of exercising their limbs: 'Mais que faire quand des voitures élégantes et commodes, et des lecteurs à gages

semblent interdire tout usage des membres et de la voix?'.<sup>67</sup> He attacked modern exercises and compared them unfavourably with those of the Ancients:

Une promenade légère, faite avant le repas, pourroit-elle satisfaire au précepte? Que doit on attendre d'un mouvement foible et monotone, qui n'accélère ni la respiration, ni le cours des émanations insensible de la surface du corps? Il faut un exercice qui tienne plus de la course, qui se fasse à l'air libre, qui produise des secousses dans les viscères, et dont le terme soit un sentiment de fatigue. Combien d'autres moyens de s'exercer furent autrefois pratiquées par les Grecs et par les Romains! Mais nos mœurs éloignent de ces pratiques salutaires, et ne prendroit-on pas pour un beau rêve, ce que Galien raconte de lui-même, que pour ne rien omettre à la loi des exercices, quand il se trouvoit aux champs en hiver, il s'occupoit à fendre du bois ou à d'autres travaux champêtres.<sup>68</sup>

In his criticism of modern modes of movement, Pinel made a direct correlation between a decline in morality and the diminution in effective physical exercise.

Pinel was not alone in his critique of the 'promenade légère' and of 'des voitures élégantes et commodes'. Walking was a contentious issue and distinctions were made between various techniques. As we have seen, Rousseau, in *Émile*, attacked the public promenades of Paris because they encouraged vanity.<sup>69</sup> Jacquin also emphasised his criticism of public walks, by contrasting them harshly with walking in the countryside:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>66</sup> 'Hygiène', *Gazette de Santé*, no. 36, 1784, pp. 141-42.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., no. 31, 1784.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> See above, Chapter One, Section 'Rousseau's critique of Noble Exercises'.

En parlant avec éloge de la promenade, je n'ai en vue que celle qui se fait à pied, dans un air bien pur, et où l'on prend vraiment de l'exercice; car je n'appelle pas promenade ces lieux publics, tels que nos jardins et le boulevard, où les *gens du bon ton* se rendent, dans des voitures bien commodes, pour s'asseoir. En vérité, est-ce là faire de l'exercice? N'est-ce pas venir simplement étaler son inutile existence?<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, distinctions were made between carriages which were good for the body and those which encouraged idleness. The 'voiture' which had, in the early part of the century, been considered a perfectly adequate exercise, came under attack. Health writers were particularly scathing about riding in carriages with good suspension. As Pressavin commented:

Pour tirer tout l'avantage qu'on a droit d'attendre de cet exercice, il ne faut point rechercher les voitures à ressort bien liant, parce que leur mouvement trop doux n'agite point assez la machine, et n'opere point par conséquent le but qu'on se propose dans l'exercice.<sup>71</sup>

However, miraculous cures were accorded to travelling in a rough carriage. Pressavin recounted the story of a poverty-stricken young woman who, although she did not have the use of her legs, was forced to make several journeys in order to benefit from a substantial property inheritance. When she travelled, she had to ride in a post-cart and, as a result of the jolts endured by her body, she recovered the use of her legs as she claimed her fortune.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 244-45.

<sup>71</sup> Pressavin, *L'Art de prolonger*, p. 154.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



Tissot, in his *De la Santé des Gens de Lettres* (1768), took issue with the traditional category of 'passive' exercise. There was an established literature dating from the seventeenth century which treated the health of literary and sedentary people.<sup>73</sup> However, Tissot's advice was altered in tone. Previous accounts presented the *gens de lettres* as possessing a naturally weak temperament which resulted in their having to follow an exact, but light régime.<sup>74</sup> Tissot, in contrast, argued that it was precisely a *lack* of adequate exercise which rendered literary men weak. He advised a régime consisting of 'active' exercises such as tennis, shuttlecock, billiards, hunting and skittles, which would strengthen the body. Tissot cautioned his reader:

L'exercice qu'on prend dans un carosse bien suspendu et qui roule sur de beaux chemins, n'en est presque pas un, non plus que celui qu'on procure aux Malades, qui sont hors d'état de sortir, par différentes machines imaginées pour cela. Ce sont de foibles ressources quand il est impossible de faire mieux, mais les Gens de lettres peuvent toujours quand ils n'attendent pas trop tard, faire beaucoup mieux.<sup>75</sup>

In reformed accounts of exercise, 'useful' movement was distinguished through its ability to work the body. Moral pressure was seen to be exerted on the urban reader, in order to encourage a more vigorous régime.

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<sup>73</sup> Andrew Wear argues that this tradition dates from the seventeenth century. See 'The History of Personal Hygiene'.

<sup>74</sup> See Le Begue de Presle, *Le Conservateur de la santé ou avis sur les dangers qu'il importe à chacun d'éviter, pour se conserver en bonne santé, et prolonger sa vie* (Paris, 1763), Chapter Eight 'Des attitudes, des travaux et des exercices du corps et de l'esprit: de l'inaction de l'un et de l'autre', pp. 233-64. Although published in 1763, Le Begue de Presle commented in the preface of the book that he had already researched this topic in 1750 and that it had been printed in Latin in 1759.

<sup>75</sup> Tissot, *De la Santé des gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1768), p. 107.

## The Cult of Antiquity

Underpinning the ‘new hygiene’ was an understanding that modern man had degenerated. Projects concerned with his regeneration accorded exercise a central role and, as we have seen, the peasant was held up as a model of health. Added to the idealization of the rural was a deep-felt admiration for the Ancients.<sup>76</sup> These ‘cults’ armed health writers with a two-pronged critique of modern urban living, which was perceived to be the cause of physical and moral degeneration.

The greatness of Antiquity permeated the pages of the *Encyclopédie*. A central feature of the admiration for Classical society was the physical prowess of the Spartans, Athenians and Romans. Jaucourt’s article ‘Gymnastique’, published in 1765, gave an account of the ancient model of gymnastics which consisted of military preparations for war, athletic gymnastics for recreation, competition and enjoyment and medical gymnastics for the preservation of health and the cure of illness.

Jaucourt used this discussion to argue that the use of exercise, and the importance placed upon it, had declined in modern times, to the detriment of health and strength. According to Jaucourt, the Ancients situated exercise at the centre of their social world.<sup>77</sup> The utility of exercise was recognised in everyday life: ‘Les Médecins n’étoient pas les seuls qui la recommandassent; tout le monde en général se convainquit si fort de l’utilité qu’on en retiroit, qu’il y avoit une infinité de gens

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<sup>76</sup> Admiration for the Ancients continued during the course of the century, culminating in the ‘cult’ of ancient Republicanism during the Revolution. For the cult of antiquity see, R. L. Herbert, *David, Voltaire, Brutus, and the French Revolution: an Essay in Art and Politics* (London, 1972) and H. T. Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit* (Chicago, 1937).

<sup>77</sup> Dessesartz, writing in 1760, also commented on the ability of the Ancients to incorporate exercise into their daily life through regulation and law. See Dessesartz, *Traité de l’éducation*, p. 405.

qui passoient une partie de leur vie dans les lieux d'exercices qu'on appelloit gymnases'.<sup>78</sup> In Athens, even literary people enjoyed the use of medical gymnastics, and all sensible men preferred to use this preservative method of health conservation than to take medication. Thus, Jaucourt used the medical gymnastics of Athens to illustrate a successful model of exercise that had been incorporated into the social fabric to improve the health and strength of all citizens.

Jaucourt argued that in modern times, useful exercises no longer existed. Instead, society promoted pursuits such as dancing and fencing, which actually caused harm and created weakness. Modern exercises were therefore entirely inappropriate. Instead of improving strength and health, they hindered it. Furthermore, exercise had lost its status within society and people who took too much exercise were criticised:

Dans nos siècles modernes, un homme qui s'appliqueroit trop aux exercices, nous paroîtroit méprisable, parce que nous n'avons plus d'autres objets de recherches que ce que nous nommons les agrémens; c'est le fruit de notre luxe asiatique. La danse ne nous inspire que la mollesse, et l'exercice des armes la fureur des combats singuliers; deux pestes qui nous ne regardons point avec effroi, et qui cependant moissonnent la jeunesse des états les plus florissans.<sup>79</sup>

Jaucourt associated the decline of exercise in society with the growth of luxury. This connection was explored further in his article 'Sparte ou Lacedemonie' (1765).<sup>80</sup> Here, Jaucourt argued that the outlawing of commerce and personal wealth

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<sup>78</sup> Jaucourt, 'Gymnastique', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 7, p. 1017.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 1019.

<sup>80</sup> Jaucourt, 'Sparte ou Lacédémone', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 15, pp. 428-34.



and the implementation of a harsh physical régime for all citizens made Sparta an example to the modern world. Jourdain, writing in 1771, argued: ‘Les anciens étoient si convaincus de l’utilité de l’exercice, qu’ils s’en faisoient un devoir indispensable. Mais le luxe et la gourmandise ont insensiblement captivé les hommes, et leur ont fait perdre de vue l’objet le plus essentiel à leur santé’.<sup>81</sup> Thus, luxury (excess) and physical weakness were regarded as intimately connected.

Pinel also worked from the premise that the importance of exercise had been lost in modern times. In his opinion, Lycurgus, the legislator of Sparta, had produced the best principles of hygiene. The escape from inactivity, the laws against celibacy, the attention to good marriage matches, the self-control imposed upon the couple, the hard education of children, simple food given sparingly, the routine of military exercises and, finally, the prohibition of any activity which could encourage weakness, all contributed to produce healthy and strong Spartans.<sup>82</sup> Pinel did not merely refer to medics from Antiquity in his commentaries on hygiene; he also held up public figures as models of virtue. He described the régime of the Roman Emperor, Alexander Severus. The Emperor rose early each day and spent some time in contemplation of his heroes. Then, he spent several hours engaged with the administration of the State. After working on his poetry he exercised, playing tennis, running, fighting, and performing the gymnastic arts. After a cold bath, his appetite stimulated, he ate a simple meal. Leading by example, Alexander proscribed idleness amongst his people.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Jourdain, *Le Médecin des dames*, p. 144.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Hygiène’, *Gazette de Santé*, n. 8, 1786, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Hygiène’, *Gazette de Santé*, n. 36, 1784, pp. 141-42. Similarly, Pinel discussed the régime of the retired Spurina, whose life had been recounted by Pliny the younger.

## Urban Exercise

For all the harsh criticisms levelled at the modern urban body, health writers did not expect their readers to turn their backs on society. Rather, they furnished their readers with a régime, which utilised the shared ideals of ‘nature’ and Antiquity, that would be followed without leaving the city. As Tissot asserted, in his health manual addressed to fashionable people: ‘Je n’invite point à vivre comme les Sauvages....Je ne pense pas non plus à rappeler à la vie du laboureur’.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, admiration for the Ancients and for the natural was not without qualification. Although the example of Sparta was frequently provided as a model for the successful implementation of physical discipline, a complete return to this state was never recommended.<sup>85</sup> The essence of Sparta had to be incorporated into a modern way of life. Ancient exercises were to be adapted to modern *moeurs*. Some Ancient customs, such as the Spartan abandonment of weak infants to the elements and the public exercises of scantily-clad young women, were regarded by their eighteenth-century commentators as inappropriate in modern society. Doppet, in his *Le Médecin Philosophe*, highlighted this: ‘N’arrêtons pas nos regards sur des furieux qui se déchiroient afin de mériter des applaudissements que des hommes avoient la cruauté de leur prodiguer, pour les encourager à se mutiler: appliquons la Gymnastique médicinale à nos usages et à nos moeurs’.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Tissot, *Gens du Monde*, pp. 141-43.

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of the influence of Sparta on eighteenth-century France see, E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford, 1969), Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen.

<sup>86</sup> Doppet, *Le Médecin Philosophe*, p. 23.

Similarly, an uncompromising return to nature was not advocated.<sup>87</sup> It was never contended that people should live as savages in order to conserve their health; a sensible application of nature was sufficient. Pinel summed up this sentiment in the *Gazette de Santé*:

Ce n'est point que je conseille d'aller chercher la santé dans les forêts de l'Amérique septentrionale; je veux seulement faire voir que les plus puissans moyens de guérir de la plupart des maladies chroniques, sont par-tout en notre puissance. La nature nous offre en tous lieux l'air, la lumière du soleil et le libre exercice de nos membres<sup>88</sup>

According to Pinel, nature provided the means with which to sustain health, and nature surrounded everyone; even those who lived in towns.

Furthermore, Pinel questioned the wisdom of earlier criticism of modern exercises, such as we have seen in Jaucourt's harsh critique in the *Encyclopédie*. In a letter published in the *Journal de Paris*, dated 1786, Pinel argued that although dance and tennis appeared at first to be frivolous amusements and that *l'exercice des armes* seemed to be an art which was destructive, the neglect of these activities had in fact worsened health. Moreover, people could benefit from them, particularly in the winter months, in order to prevent the lethargic state into which people were prone to fall.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See D. G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History 1750-1800* (Cambridge, 1984), and above, Chapter Two, Section 'Conclusion: the Audience for *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile*'.

<sup>88</sup> *Gazette de Santé* (1785), n. 24, p. 96.

<sup>89</sup> 'Médecine', *Journal de Paris*, 12 January 1786, pp. 50-51.



A range of exercises needed to be offered to city dwellers. Catering for the popularity of horse-riding in the 1780s, a Parisian company provided a riding service for those who had been advised to ride for the benefit of their health:

Nous avertissons de nouveau les personnes à qui l'exercice du cheval est nécessaire pour rétablir leur santé, qu'elles trouveront, rue de Vaugirard, près de la rue des Fossés de M. le Prince, n. 108, des Chevaux de selle, bien équipés et bien dressés; qu'on s'engage même à aller prendre dans un cabrioler, celles qui voudront monter à cheval hors des barrières, et à les conduire au lieu qu'elles indiqueront et où les chevaux les attendrons<sup>90</sup>

The company offered a tailored riding package for Parisians, which included the provision of particularly obedient horses, transporting their customers outside of the city to ride, offering riding companions for people (especially the young) and supplying saddles for women in order that they, too, could take advantage of the service.<sup>91</sup>

Clearly, the readers of health advice did not have to leave the city in order to conserve their health. Entrepreneurs seized the opportunities presented to them by the increased public interest in exercise.<sup>92</sup> The key objective for commentators such as Tissot and Pinel was to combat the wilful idleness of certain sections of urban society. Inactivity, and the ill-health it produced, had to be eradicated through the

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<sup>90</sup> *Affiches, Annonces et Avis Divers, ou Journal Général de France*, 'Annonces Particulieres', Monday 17 January 1785.

<sup>91</sup> See, *Affiches*, 'Annonces Particulieres', Supplement to 25 April 1785, p. 1100, *Affiches*, 'Annonces Particulieres', Thursday 17 March 1785, p. 717, and *Affiches*, 'Annonces Particulieres', Supplement to 13 April 1786, p. 957.

<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of the 'business of exercise', see below, Chapter Seven.

improved used of hygiene. A moral pressure was exerted on *gens du monde* to reform their style of life.

## Conclusion

In making claims for the ambidexterity of the new-born, Baumès repeated a popular eighteenth-century theory which struck at the heart of debates surrounding the utility of exercise:

La délicatesse du toucher beaucoup plus grande dans la main droite que dans la gauche, prouve indubitablement combien l'exercice sert au développement des sens. J'ai déjà fait sentir les abus de se priver de la finesse du tact dans la main gauche. L'enfant de naissance est ambidextre; on ne saurait trop presser les pères et mères de mettre tous leurs soins à lui conserver cette précieuse prérogative.<sup>93</sup>

Nature, it was contended, did not produce weakness; this was developed solely through man's inaction. Jaucourt, in his article 'Oisiveté', laid the blame for modern feebleness at the door of 'l'éducation molle et oisive de la jeunesse'. This produced a multitude of illnesses which had been practically unknown amongst the Ancients, whose 'mâle et vigoureuse' education assured them a robust health.<sup>94</sup>

An improved education, which placed a greater emphasis upon the body, was viewed as the means to physically reform citizens. Exercise was characterised as a universal need. As we shall see, the contention that increased activity would make everyone's body stronger and healthier had a powerful political role in late Ancien Régime France. In a drive to combat urban degeneration, the bodies of women,

children, and military officers were particularly targeted. These subjects will provide the focus of the following three chapters.

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<sup>93</sup> Baumes, 'Memoire sur l'éducation physique', p. 172, SRM 120 d. 2. N. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Jaucourt, 'Oisiveté', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, p. 447.



## Chapter Four

### *Reforming Le Sexe*

#### Introduction

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the leisured elite became both subject and object of health advice in France. Within this target audience, a subgroup was particularly singled out – namely women. Manuals such as Venel's *Essai sur la santé et sur l'éducation médicale des filles destinées au mariage* (1776) and Jourdain's *Le Médecin des Dames* (1777) focused specifically on female health and the treatment of *maladies des femmes*. Health writers wrote about women and for women. Medical historians have argued that women's health tended to be treated separately to that of men in the second half of the eighteenth century because, for the first time, the female body was viewed by medical theorists as completely different from its male counterpart.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, according to this model, a separate health literature emerged to cater for the unique medical needs of women, which centred upon their role as mothers. In contrast, through an examination of discussions of exercise, this chapter will argue that although the childbearing capacity of women was foregrounded in these texts, their physical capabilities were perceived as comparable to those of men. Consequently, exercise literature for both sexes was similar; it was the manner in which the advice was packaged and marketed that individualised it. A new health literature for women emerged as a result of social and commercial objectives, as well as changes in medical theory.

Wealthy, urban women were a particular focus of health advice for two key reasons. Firstly, women were viewed by social commentators to be central to the

reform of a State which was perceived as weak. As child-bearers, women were regarded as crucial in the fight against depopulation.<sup>2</sup> In order to produce strong and healthy citizens, women first needed to be physically reformed themselves. Thus, women's health and the exercise they did were at the heart of plans for social improvement. Secondly, women were important consumers of health advice. At the centre of fashionable circles, they were powerful shapers of public opinion on any health innovation or product.

Elite women were perceived by health writers to be in need of corporeal reform. Lack of exercise, it was argued, lay at the heart of their physical malaise. It was generally contended that their luxurious style of life rendered them weak. Despite their bodily 'corruption', women were deemed capable of physical improvement; by following the advice contained in health literature, women could become stronger and healthier. There were conflicting views within these publications, but the general consensus was that the physical reform of both men and women was attainable through similar changes in lifestyle, within which exercise played a key role. Thus, a universal model of the body would emerge - equally applicable to both sexes, characterised by health and strength and attainable through physical and moral education. Advice on women's health must therefore be viewed as the first link in a broader chain of improvement in urban lifestyles, which also encompassed the reform of children and men.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur (eds.), *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (California, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Jordanova also argues that the concentration on women's health was a result of the Government's fear of depopulation. See L. Jordanova, 'The Popularization of Medicine: Tissot on Onanism', *Textual Practice*, 1 (1987), p. 69.

Women will be treated separately in this chapter, because they formed an important category of enquiry within the primary literature. However, any discussion of gender is necessarily concerned with knowledge about sexual *difference*, or the perceived relationship between men and women.<sup>3</sup> Secondary discussions of gender in the Enlightenment have tended to focus upon women in isolation. Yet, in eighteenth-century debates, women were examined in relation to how they differed from, or were similar to, men. Both sexes were considered within a wider framework of debate concerned with the improvement of the State. As we have seen, within the leisured elite both men and women alike were regarded as in need of reform.

The chapter will commence with an exploration of recent studies of women in the Enlightenment. I will highlight the ways in which my approach differs from these and the reasons why my account demands a more nuanced understanding of eighteenth-century medical discourses of women. Next, I will examine the relationship between women and exercise as discussed by health writers. Why was exercise considered central to the reform of women? What types of physical activity were deemed suitable? Lastly, using the case of the Genevan physician Théodore Tronchin, I will highlight the role of Parisian women as active consumers of health advice. Their role as medical patrons ensured that women contributed to the terms of their own physical reform.

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<sup>3</sup> See J. Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', reproduced in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988).



## The Construction of *Natural Difference*

Historians' treatment of eighteenth-century women has altered with changing perceptions of the Enlightenment itself; whether or not it is viewed as a positive or negative process. Samia Spencer, in her discussion of women's experience within the Enlightenment, argues that during the course of the eighteenth century, 'Women acquired an unspoken right to knowledge and education'.<sup>4</sup> In stark contrast, more recent accounts have claimed that the Enlightenment, far from opening up opportunities for women, served to exclude them from intellectual and reasoned activity. In short, women were prohibited from participating in public life and confined to the complementary roles of wife and mother. However, both approaches adopt a teleological standpoint which searches for the origins of modern woman's emancipation or subordination. Enlightenment debates on gender are not examined on their own terms.

Research into the role of medicine and science in shaping attitudes to women also fuels this stance. According to this literature, a gendered body emerged for the first time in the second half of the eighteenth century and an 'incommensurable difference' was established between the sexes.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Laqueur has famously argued that in the eighteenth century, 'sex as we know it was invented'.<sup>6</sup> He claims that the sexes were not previously regarded as biologically distinct. According to Laqueur, within humoral theory the workings of bodies were viewed as universal and the secretions of men and women regarded as similar. In medical texts, sexual organs were represented as essentially identical (the womb was presented as an

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<sup>4</sup> S. Spencer, 'Women and Education', in id., (ed.), *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Indiana, 1984), pp. 93-94.

<sup>5</sup> T. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard, 1990), p. 149.

inverted penis, and the ovaries as withdrawn testicles). Furthermore, both sexes underwent the same physiological processes in order to procreate – women had to achieve orgasm. However, according to Laqueur's model all of this changed in the eighteenth century, when a new medical discourse emerged to challenge humoralist conceptions of the male and female anatomy. Londa Schiebinger argues that there was a movement 'to define and redefine sex differences in every part of the human body'.<sup>7</sup> Instead of being regarded physiologically as inferior men, women became completely different, yet complementary, beings. Henceforth, women were defined according to their sexual function and became, for the first time, 'le sexe'.<sup>8</sup>

Most importantly, the work of Laqueur and Schiebinger demonstrates that conceptions of sexual difference are not 'natural', but historically constructed. Following feminist historians of science, they place the medical discourse which they have traced within the context of an attempt in European society to 'naturalise' gender roles, thereby fixing the domestic and maternal role of women and excluding them from public life. According to this historiography, science - the domain of men - barred women from its institutions and thus, scientific knowledge (of women) was produced entirely by men. The female and her function (childbirth) was then aligned with nature and her role in society became fixed. This literature questions the separation of science from its social institutions and reveals 'scientific' perceptions of nature, the natural, and the body to be 'laden with cultural values'.<sup>9</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> L. Schiebinger, 'Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy', in *The Making of the Modern Body*, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> L. Steinbrugge, *The Moral Sex: Women's Nature in the French Enlightenment*, Eng. Trans. (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Schiebinger, 'Skeletons in the Closet', p. 61. See also, L. Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1989).

according to this literature, 'nature' was a construction of eighteenth and nineteenth-century science.<sup>10</sup>

Followers of Laqueur's work have tended to focus upon medical theories surrounding the mental capacity of women. They associate the subordination of women, and their relegation to the domestic sphere, with the Enlightenment project itself. Anne Vila argues that Pierre Roussel, the Montpellier physician and frequenter of the *salon* of Madame Helvetius, used the medical doctrine of vitalism in his *Système Physique et Morale des Femmes* (1775) to show that intellectual activity was harmful to women's nature. According to Roussel, the 'vital' principal which gave the body purposeful movement functioned differently in men and women. Vila concludes that the quest for enlightenment came to be regarded as 'natural for man's constitution but pathological to woman's'.<sup>11</sup>

Steinbrugge also uses Roussel's *Système* to argue that during the Enlightenment, women's 'nature' was established as different from that of men.<sup>12</sup> She associates changes in thinking about gender, and the intellectual capacities of women, with a shift in understanding in epistemology. Whereas seventeenth-century Cartesian dualism regarded mind and body as discrete categories, sensualist theories of knowledge, championed by Locke and Condillac, promoted the notion of information as gathered through the senses. Thus, the body became crucial to intellectual development. As male and female bodies were viewed as distinct, so too

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, M. Benjamin (ed.), *Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry 1780-1945* (Oxford, 1991); E. Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Yale University, 1985); M. Jacobus and E. Fox Keller et al. (eds.), *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (New York, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Anne C. Vila, 'Sex and Sensibility: Pierre Roussel's *Système physique et moral de la femme*', *Representations* 52, 1995, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Steinbrugge, *The Moral Sex*, Chapter Three 'The Sensualist Turning Point'.



was their intellectual capacity and progression. This was in stark contrast to seventeenth-century discussions of women, led by Poulain de la Barre (1676-1725), which argued that 'l'esprit n'a point de sexe'.<sup>13</sup>

Both Vila and Steinbrugge use as a theoretical structure for their work the definition of woman as 'other', in binary opposition to the universal category of 'enlightened male'. Vila, Steinbrugge and Outram are concerned with the ways in which contemporaries intellectualised the discrepancy between Enlightenment as a universal capacity, and Enlightenment as inaccessible to certain sections of society - women, blacks, the poor.

The contention that woman in the eighteenth century became biologically 'other' – a subordinated, domesticated, child-bearer - is almost as powerful as the paradigm of 'natural' sexual difference, which the same historiography has successfully exposed. Whilst the utility and the applicability of the 'separate spheres' model to 'real' women has been fruitfully questioned by historians, the model of 'incommensurable difference' as set out by Laqueur has tended to escape interrogation.<sup>14</sup> Laqueur himself admits that it would be impossible to discover who actually believed these new ideas about sexual difference. He also acknowledges that humoral views of reproduction continued to be used alongside his new model.<sup>15</sup> Estelle Cohen goes further, arguing that Laqueur's one-sex model is not wholly

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<sup>13</sup> Poulain de la Barre, *De l'Égalité des Deux Sexes* (Paris, 1676). For a discussion of de la Barre, see Steinbrugge, *The Moral Sex*, Chapter One.

<sup>14</sup> For a critical examination of the separate spheres model, see L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987) and A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Review* 36 (1993), pp. 383-414.

<sup>15</sup> See D. Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 86.

applicable to early modern France. Ovarian theorists had been challenging traditional understanding of the reproductive organs since the Renaissance.<sup>16</sup>

Most crucially, as Carla Hesse has refreshingly contended, whilst scientific and philosophical discourses did aim to maintain sexual hierarchy, they were not mirrors of the social world. Although real women were subordinated, they did not uniformly adhere to prescriptive literature but found their own means to engage with the Enlightenment project.<sup>17</sup> Hesse has shown that women played a critical role in the explosion of print culture which occurred during the latter part of the century. Similarly, Dena Goodman has highlighted the importance of the *salonnière* to the production and transmission of Enlightenment culture.<sup>18</sup> Women were not necessarily excluded from the public sphere.<sup>19</sup>

Dorinda Outram argues that scholars 'have perhaps neglected the complexity of the Enlightenment response' to the issue of gender.<sup>20</sup> She reminds us that within Enlightenment culture itself there were conflicting views on gender relations or, more particularly, the social role and status of women. Thus, medical discourses of

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<sup>16</sup> Estelle Cohen made this point in discussion during a conference held at the University of Warwick on 15 July 2000, entitled 'Secret Bodies: Medical Knowledge and Early Modern Women'.

<sup>17</sup> C. Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: French Women and the Problem of Modernity* (Princeton, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> See above Chapter One, Section 'The Enlightened Public Sphere'. The blurring of 'separate spheres' and the 'public sphere' as models has been shown to be problematic to an understanding of woman's place within society. Some feminist historians such as Joan Landes have equated Habermas' public sphere with 'public' life, and so have regarded its emergence as necessarily exclusive of women, (women having been banished to 'private', or domestic life), whereas Keith Michael Baker and Dena Goodman have shown that Habermas' public sphere was not 'public' in that sense, at all. It was made up of private individuals, joined together through both the world of print, and through select institutions, such as the salon. See J. B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988); K. M. Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas', in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); D. Goodman, 'Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Régime', *History and Theory*, 31 (1992), pp. 1-20.

<sup>20</sup> Outram, *The Enlightenment*, pp. 93-94

gender need to be viewed within a wider spectrum of literature. Historians of medicine have certainly tended to overestimate the power of medical explanations of the differences between the sexes in this period. Outram rightly adds that there has been a tendency to place too much significance on Rousseau's version of sexual difference, as set out in his treatment of *Émile* and *Sophie* which (according to Outram) broadly upholds the theory of 'incommensurable difference' laid out in medical discourse.<sup>21</sup>

As Outram demonstrates, the *querelle des femmes* raged in the final years of the *Ancien Régime*. There were arguments to suggest that women were considered more civilized than men because they were sociable and that polite sociability was regarded as a sign of higher civilization. Men, it was maintained, had always used physical force to settle conflict whereas the polite conversation of women was seen to be a more civilized means of resolving disagreement. Their weakness enabled them to transcend the physical. In short, women were regarded by this argument as the source of order. However, women's heightened sensibility was alternatively used to argue that they were incapable of abstract or rational thought and so could in no way participate in political life. *Reason* was used to justify why women – as *naturally* different from men - could not be rational subjects. In absolute opposition to arguments surrounding sensibility and sociability, women were also regarded as the source of disorder. Men were seen to be slaves to their desire for them and so women had the breakdown of order - in the form of sexual power - at their fingertips. Moreover, women were also viewed as sinful, lazy and self-indulgent – the symbols of a degenerative urban existence.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 94.



Whilst Outram presents a diverse range of approaches to gender in the Enlightenment, she assumes that the medical and scientific world provided a homogenous view of women. In fact, there were competing discourses within the medical world. As noted above, a number of historians have used the Vitalist Pierre Roussel to argue that eighteenth-century medical discussions served to add weight to the movement to exclude women from public life and from the process of Enlightenment, through asserting the essential difference between male and female bodies. Through his use of the principle of sensibility, Roussel presented a case for sexual difference being evident throughout the human body. However, whilst a popular and widely read medical treatise, *Système physique et moral de la femme* was not representative in its treatment of women's health. Within prescriptive health literature, with which this chapter is primarily concerned, there were different medicalised views of women's bodies. The versions of women's 'nature' offered by Outram and others all focus upon how women differed from men. Debates surrounding health, physical strength and exercise, on the other hand, often presented a picture of the female body as similar to that of the male. As we shall see, Roussel's view of the weak and delicate sex was opposed by figures such as Jean-Charles Desessartz, who argued that the *mollesse* of women was a result of their style of life and not their 'nature'.

Thus, prescriptive literature which engaged with the *querelle des femmes* presented diverse arguments as to what constituted women's 'nature'. Jordanova, in her *Sexual Visions*, aims to look at how sexuality, which she views as a social construct, came to be naturalised, or rather how social characteristics came to be

veiled behind ‘natural’ ideas.<sup>22</sup> This chapter argues that no matter what was to transpire in the nineteenth century, theories about sexual difference had not been naturalised in France by the late eighteenth century. Discussions of women’s bodies (and those of men) were self-consciously and explicitly tied up with social agendas. The diversity of opinions on the nature of women indicates that whilst gender was a key Enlightenment issue, it remained contentious.

There was a tension between nature and education in Enlightenment projects of reform. In an era which championed social improvement through the power of education, ‘natural’ man and woman were categories which struggled to find meaning. Men and women had to be re-trained to become more ‘natural’. Feminist historians have generally taken Rousseau to be a powerful proponent of the ‘naturalisation’ of gender roles, yet as we have seen, Sophie is a product of her education, as is Émile.<sup>23</sup> Rousseau proposed a sexual division of labour, whereby men and women were to carry out separate social roles in order to work towards a common societal goal. As Penny Weiss argues, Sophie may have been weaker and more delicate than Émile, but only because Rousseau wanted her to be: ‘Rousseau does not find women to be naturally weak at all; rather, he intentionally makes them weak. That is, women’s weakness is not the necessary cause of their social role but rather the intentional result of it.’<sup>24</sup>

Discussions of physical education in medical and education literature highlighted the ability of everybody to become stronger and healthier through increased activity. Within writing on exercise and physical reform women were

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<sup>22</sup> Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section ‘Sophie’s Body’.

<sup>24</sup> Penny A. Weiss, *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex, and Politics* (New York, 1993), p. 41.

viewed as potential mothers, but their bodies were not regarded as incommensurable with those of men. Both sexes were seen to have the capacity to physically reform themselves. Physical fitness was deemed to be an essential part of being a useful citizen and this had to be inculcated. Woman's role as mother was discussed in social, not biological terms. Thus, the limits of female strength were measured by social convention and not by her nature.

### **Women as the Focus of Health Advice**

Writing in 1775, Pierre Roussel argued that her physical and moral make-up rendered woman ideally suited to her role in society: that of wife and mother. Furthermore, her sedentary existence helped to keep her in good health:

L'existence civile des femmes est moins variée; les occupations de la plupart de celles qui ont le bonheur de travailler, sont presque par-tout les mêmes, et se réduisent à des travaux qui, n'agitant pas excessivement le corps ni l'esprit, servent à faciliter les fonctions vitales, et à maintenir également la santé et la beauté.<sup>25</sup>

According to Roussel, woman's weakness benefited her social role. As we have seen, his work has been employed by feminist historians as evidence that eighteenth-century medical discourse used biological disparity to justify social difference. However, an examination of other eighteenth-century health writers provides a contrasting image of female bodies. This model challenged the 'natural' weakness of woman and called for her physical reform. A delicate woman, it was argued, produced a sickly infant.



Rousseau placed women at the heart of his call for social reform. Women's childbearing function ensured that they held centre stage in calls for social improvement. In addition to more generalised fears surrounding depopulation, physiocratic theories from the late 1750s placed emphasis upon agricultural production and advocated the production of a larger and stronger workforce to cultivate the land. It was contended that women needed not only to increase the quantity of their offspring, but also to improve the quality. Thus, the act of reproduction was a central concern of the State. As the Montpellier physician Jean-André Venel commented in his *Essai sur la santé et sur l'éducation médicale des filles destinées au mariage* (1776): 'L'union conjugale influe donc sur le bien général et particulier: l'État, la société, les familles, tous y sont à la fois intéressés'.<sup>26</sup>

The health of parents-to-be was perceived to be central to breaking the cycle of physical weakness which was seen to have infected the upper sections of society. Venel argued that it was impossible for a weak couple to produce strong and healthy children: 'Une génération saine, nombreuse et vigoureuse, qui est le but du mariage...exige nécessairement de ceux qui s'y destinent, une provision suffisante de matériaux propres à la produire'.<sup>27</sup> However, unlike earlier views of reproduction which privileged the role of the male, eighteenth-century commentators argued that the female's part in the production of strong and healthy offspring was more crucial. As Venel commented: 'Mais les influences bonnes ou mauvaises de l'état physique

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<sup>25</sup> Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme* (Paris, 1775), pp. 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé et sur l'éducation médicale des filles destinées au mariage* (Yverdon, 1776), p. v.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. This was a view shared by other health writers. For example, Ballexserd in his *Dissertation sur l'éducation physique des enfants* (1762) argued that 'la bonne constitution du corps d'un enfant, la force et la vigueur de son tempérament, dépendent beaucoup du bon régime de vie que son pere et sa mere auront observé avant sa conception', p. 5.

des époux, ne sont pas aussi considérables de la part de l'homme que de celle de la femme, parce qu'elle contribue bien plus que lui au grand oeuvre de la génération'.<sup>28</sup>

It was generally recognised amongst health writers that the style of life led by the *demoiselle* adversely affected her health. However, in contrast to wealthy men, who were held fully responsible for their personal ill-health (the result of a debauched lifestyle), women were often regarded as victims of their social status. Their privileged position in society, it was argued, forced them to lead a sedentary, unvaried and constrained existence. As Venel contended:

la jeune citadine est la victime de sa haute naissance et de son opulence. Contrainte de passer dans sa prison dorée les plus beaux tems de sa vie, l'âge du vrai bonheur, et qui décide le plus de celui à venir dont la santé est le seul vrai fondement; elle ne peut faire un pas ni agir presque d'aucune manière, sans une permission expresse.'<sup>29</sup>

Although the young *demoiselle* naturally desired to be physically active, through lack of exercise she eventually became feeble and lazy. Thus, weakness was not her natural state, but one acquired through a restrictive upbringing. Moreover, the inactive lifestyle of the young woman had implications not simply for her own health, but also for the well-being of her offspring. Consequently, it reduced her chances of producing healthy children. As Jean-Charles Desessartz argued:

Il est aussi impossible qu'avec cette conduite les jeunes Dames aient une bonne santé, et mettent au monde des enfans sains et assez forts pour

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<sup>28</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. vi.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 146. For a separate discussion of the idea of women as victims of their circumstances, see Laudec, *Etablissement propre à l'éducation physique et morale des enfans, depuis la fin de leur allaitement jusqu'à leur septième année* (Paris, 1772), p. 5.

soutenir les incommodités de la vie, qu'il est impossible qu'un homme  
qui mange continuellement du poison, n'est soit pas incommodé.<sup>30</sup>

In this way, the physical corruption of the mother was passed onto her child – if she indeed attempted to produce a child. Tissot, as we have seen, argued that the *gens du monde* often decided not to have children because they interfered with their luxurious style of life.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the answer to the problem of weak children lay with the reform of the mother-to-be. This argument was given weight by comparisons with the ways of life of wealthy women and peasants. Venel asserted: 'C'est à la vie agissante que mènent les jeunes paysannes dès leur tendre enfance, qu'elles sont principalement redevables de la santé qui les différencie si avantageusement des demoiselles'.<sup>32</sup> The peasant girl was free to express her natural desire to move her body; to exercise continually, 'soit pour jouer, soit pour travailler'.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, 'nos Demoiselles sont condamnées à rester presque tout la journée dans un fauteuil'.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Venel contrasted the lifestyle of 'la libre paysanne' with the imprisoned 'citadine'.<sup>35</sup> The peasant girl was invariably presented as happy with her lot. Not enslaved by her condition, she was content in work and at play.

Lack of exercise was seen to hold the key to woman's weak state. Pierre Virard noted in his *Essai sur la santé des filles nubiles* (1779) that, 'Le plus grand nombre des femmes qui habitent les villes, s'exercent trop peu'.<sup>36</sup> Venel argued

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<sup>30</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation corporelle des enfans* (Paris, 1760), p. xxvi.

<sup>31</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section 'The Enlightened Physician'.

<sup>32</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, p. 398.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 398.

<sup>35</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la Santé*, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Virard, *Essai sur la santé des filles nubiles* (London, 1779), p. 45.



more fiercely that, ‘cette inaction est non seulement la principale cause des maux attachés à cet ordre, mais qu’on peut même croire, sans craindre de se tromper, qu’elle égale seule toutes les autres.’<sup>37</sup> Jourdain, in his *Le Médecin des Dames*, launched a scathing attack on the ineffectual exercise procured from the daily activities of wealthy women:

Quand une femme est jeune, forte, vigoureuse, bien constituée et bien portant, croit-elle faire un exercice convenable, en sortant de son lit pour aller à sa toilette, de sa toilette à la table, de la table au jeu, et de-là au spectacle?<sup>38</sup>

According to Jourdain, her most vigorous activity was to travel in a comfortable carriage with closed windows. The remainder of the day was spent in front of the mirror. Venel likened the life of a *fille de naissance* to that of a dormouse, or a slow and feeble snail: ‘cette vie stupéfiante... a beaucoup de rapport avec celle du loir, ou du lent et mou limaçon’.<sup>39</sup> He was particularly critical of the amount of sleeping that they did in soft beds. Jourdain argued that the lack of movement in women’s lives seriously affected their health. Inactivity, he contended, suppressed the periods and caused painful pregnancies which resulted in awkward childbirths.

Women, it was argued, needed to be persuaded of the harmful effects of their current style of life. They had to be educated on the beneficial effects of health in order to understand that their current existence was antithetical to it. Desessartz contended:

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<sup>37</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> Jourdain, *Le Médecin des dames ou l’art de les conserver en santé* (Paris, 1771), p. 145.

<sup>39</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 148.

En exhortant des dames à embrasser un genre de vie moins irrégulier, et plus conforme aux loix de la Nature, c'est à leur santé, à leur vie que nous les exhortons à sacrifier des plaisirs bruyans et dépourvus de toute vraie satisfaction, puisqu'ils ne sont jamais accompagnés du bonheur qui est l'âme de tous les plaisirs, la santé.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, according to this health advice, women needed to be strengthened through increased physical activity. Their perceived weakness was not considered to be natural, but acquired. A reformed approach both to their education in childhood, and to their behaviour as adults was deemed necessary. Women's reform had to be continual. Desessartz argued that the paternal household was more harmful to a young girl's health than a convent education. In a structured educational environment, he maintained, girls had regulated hours of recreation during which time they were able to run in the fresh air.<sup>41</sup> However, according to Desessartz, if exercise was not maintained after their schooling, then girls could easily relapse into ill-health: 'Il n'est pas rare de voir les Demoiselles qui jouissoient d'une parfaite santé dans leur Couvent, tomber en langueur, et dépérir quelque temps après qu'elles sont rentrées dans la maison paternelle'.<sup>42</sup>

Health writers viewed women as victims of their domesticity and called for a reformed style of life which encompassed increased physical exercise. Women were viewed as capable of sustaining more vigorous exercises, in a similar manner to men. Although woman's social function was considered to be distinct from that of her

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<sup>40</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>41</sup> There was an ongoing debate in the eighteenth century on the relative merits of a convent or domestic education for girls - a debate to which prominent figures such as Voltaire and Madame Genlis contributed.

<sup>42</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, p. 400.

male counterpart, her physical capabilities in terms of health and strength were regarded to be very similar. As Jourdain said of physical exercise: 'Si les hommes y sont plus particulièrement destinés, les femmes ne doivent point s'en croire exemptes'.<sup>43</sup>

Desessartz was particularly vehement in his assertion that women were not naturally weak:

La différence que la Nature a établie entre la constitution des femmes et celle des hommes, ne les porte donc pas si nécessairement à la délicatesse et à la foiblesse, qu'elles ne puissent s'assurer une santé aussi ferme et aussi durable, en employant les mêmes exercices. L'oisiveté est la vraie cause de ces constitutions lâches.<sup>44</sup>

Although Desessartz argued that there were natural differences between the bodies of men and women, weakness was not a distinguishing characteristic. Inactivity, according to Desessartz, would eventually weaken the strongest of beings. Here, he used the popular comparison between the strong wild animal and its weaker domesticated counterpart to support his argument. He also used the example of women in Antiquity, whom he argued had been equal in strength to men: 'Fortes et robustes, elles le disputoient aux hommes en courage et en grandeur d'âme. Elles ne se marioient qu'après avoir acquis par l'exercice une santé ferme, et capable de supporter les peines de la grossesse, et les travaux de l'enfantement'.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Desessartz argued that modern country women were also made healthy through their daily labours. However, he acknowledged that it was not appropriate for modern

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<sup>43</sup> Jourdain, *Le Médecin des dames*, p. 144.

<sup>44</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, p. 412.

<sup>45</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, p. 410.



women of rank to exercise their bodies in the same manner as country people. He contended that distinction of social status was necessary to the well-being of the State. Ladies should not work alongside peasants in the countryside. They could, however, participate in slightly less strenuous activities which could be found within their social milieu, such as walking, riding in a carriage, moderate dancing, singing and horse-riding. These exercises would improve women's health:

Quoique ces exercices soient moins efficaces que les travaux habituels du corps, il est cependant certain que, pris fréquemment et variés suivant la saison, ils fortifieroient beaucoup les organes, et pourroient corriger les défauts d'une premiere éducation trop molle et trop oisive.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, for Desessartz, it was the social position of wealthy women which prevented them from becoming as strong as men, and not their physiological make-up. Although the exercises he recommends are not dissimilar to those that Roussel would later suggest for delicate women, the theoretical premise behind Desessartz' call to exercise was entirely different.

As we have seen, although Rousseau educated Sophie to be healthy, he did not want her to be made too strong through a Spartan education, such as he advocated for Émile.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Pinel, in his commentaries on hygiene penned in the 1780s, argued that although the legislators of Sparta offered useful lessons in exercising women, he did not recommend a return to a Spartan existence for them. However, in agreement with Rousseau, Pinel argued that the existing domestic education of women did not sufficiently develop their natural desire for activity.

## Women's Exercise

If modern women were not to emulate a Spartan régime, then what exercises were suitable for their participation? Preserving modesty and decency in women's activities was of paramount importance. Women had to behave according to their status within society. However, the codified gesture and rigid posture which had reached its apex with the court culture of Louis XIV's reign came under attack in the health literature of the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, the custom of restricting a young girl's movement and rigidly enforcing a particular gait was criticised. As we have seen, earlier in the century Nicholas Andry had recommended stays and corsets to correct children's posture.<sup>48</sup> Later, in keeping with wider criticisms of restrictive practices such as swaddling and stays, health writers demanded freedom of movement in the education of girls. For example, Venel criticised the composure and posture that young girls were expected to maintain: 'Quelque vif que soit son désir de courir, est obligée de ralentir son pas et de composer sa démarche'.<sup>49</sup> The effects of constraint in childhood were considered to be grave for women. Venel quoted Tissot, as he did regularly, to illustrate the harm that a restrictive education could exert: 'Une fille, qui à dix ans lit, au lieu de courir, doit être à vingt, ajoute M. Tissot, une femme à vapeurs, et non point une bonne nourrice'.<sup>50</sup>

A range of exercises were recommended by health writers for the physical improvement of women. Virard discussed the utility of talking – 'le babil' – to

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>47</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section 'Sophie's body'.

<sup>48</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section 'From Preservation to Exposure'.

<sup>49</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 147-48.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

women's health. He contended that women and young girls were reproached for chattering too much, yet this activity served to compensate for their sedentary style of life: 'C'est une espèce d'exercice par lequel la nature se dédommage en quelque façon de l'inertie où la société les réduit'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, management of the home was regarded as an activity which, if engaged with correctly, could provide women with sufficient movement to render them healthy. According to Pinel, fresh air and an active life through housework could enable modern women to become as healthy as their Spartan counterparts.<sup>52</sup>

It was perhaps due to the move away from the practice of rigid posture that opinions on the merits of dance were divided. It was generally agreed that this was the only form of exercise which girls currently engaged in. For this reason, Venel recommended it highly:

La danse est presque la seule branche d'exercices corporels qui entre aujourd'hui dans le plan de leur éducation, et l'on ne sauroit aussi trop la recommander. Outre le mouvement universel qu'elle procure au corps, elle développe les beautés et les graces, donne de l'extension à chaque partie et au tout, et rend le corps souple, agile, droit et ferme.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast, Desessartz criticised some forms of dance for exerting restrictive control over girls' bodies: 'Elles ne connoissent d'exercice que quand vient le Maître à danser, qui d'un air grave et sérieux leur fait mouvoir leur petit corps avec une contrainte plus insupportable encore que la gêne où elles étoient retenues'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Virard, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 85. Venel also recommended exercise of the voice. See Venel, *Essai de la santé*, p. 150.

<sup>52</sup> *Journal de Paris*, Tuesday 12 December, 1786, pp. 1443-44.

<sup>53</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l'éducation*, p. 398.



Attitudes towards horse-riding for women were also mixed. Roussel argued that it should not be recommended under normal circumstances for women; ‘mais cette espèce d’exercice, que certains états de maladies rendent quelquefois nécessaire, ne peut guere devenir l’exercice ordinaire et journalier des femmes’.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Tissot and Venel promoted women’s involvement in the activity. Tissot called for female riding academies to be established in cities in order to promote health and beauty amongst urban women:<sup>56</sup>

Il seroit à souhaiter qu’on fit contracter aux jeunes filles du monde l’habitude d’y monter, et qu’il y eût dans les grandes villes une Académie destinée uniquement à les instruire dans cet art. Non seulement la santé, mais la beauté même, y gagneroient infiniment.<sup>57</sup>

Virard also advocated horse-riding, but argued that women should ride side-saddle. Sitting astride the horse, he argued, encouraged in women a white discharge (‘des pertes blanches’) that could cause sterility.<sup>58</sup>

Pinel contended that women were particularly susceptible to loss of appetite during the winter months.<sup>59</sup> Vigorous walking, he maintained, could provide a solution. Although an avid admirer of the Ancients in matters of hygiene, Pinel also offered his readers instances of commendable contemporary practice. In this case, he used an example of a practice by Danish women to illustrate how exercise in cold weather could encourage a healthy appetite:

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<sup>55</sup> Roussel, *Système physique et moral*, p. 99-100.

<sup>56</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 151.

<sup>57</sup> Tissot, *Essai sur les maladies des gens du monde* (Lausanne, 1770), p. 164.

<sup>58</sup> Virard, *Essai sur la santé*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>59</sup> See ‘Hygiene’, *Gazette de Santé*, n. 29, 1784, pp. 113-14, and *Journal de Paris*, Tuesday 15 November 1785, pp. 1313-14.

Un Danois me fit part un jour d'une coutume salubre que les dames observent à Copenhague, même durant les froids les plus rigoureux. Elles sortent par intervalles de leurs appartemens clos, se couvrent avec soin, et s'exposent par degrés à l'air extérieur: on les accompagne dans un place publique, où elles font plusieurs courses avec vitesse, elles reviennent ensuite, avec une faim dévorante, goûter les délices d'une table bien service.<sup>60</sup>

For Pinel, here was a case of urban women taking positive action to improve their own health.

Exercise was regarded as a major contributor to health for women in much the same ways as it was for men. However, physical activity was also seen to reduce health problems which were regarded to be particular to *le sexe*. Referred to as *maladies des femmes*, nervous disorders such as hysteria and the vapours and physical complaints such as vaginal discharge (*les fleurs blanches*) were viewed as affecting certain women only – those from wealthy urban families. Furthermore, it was argued, the pain associated with pregnancy and childbirth did not affect 'les classes laborieuses de la société'.<sup>61</sup>

As we have seen already in his comparison of town and country living in *Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé*, Tissot maintained that exercise offered urban women the key to limiting the disorders of their sex. This view was taken up in later health writing. *Les Vapeurs* for example, were generally regarded to be unique to a sedentary urban existence. François-Amédée Doppet, medical graduate of Turin and proponent of mesmerism, also linked *les fleurs blanches* – that other notorious symptom of urban

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<sup>60</sup> *Journal de Paris*, Tuesday 15 November 1785, 'Médecine', p. 1314.

luxury - to a lack of exercise. In his *Le Médecin Philosophe* of 1787 he argued: 'C'est dans les mœurs et la Gymnastique que je vais puiser des remèdes pour combattre une maladie d'autant plus funeste qu'elle est, peut-être, la cause de la dégénération de l'espèce humaine'.<sup>62</sup>

The use of regular exercise was seen to aid both pregnancy and childbirth. Within the traditional framework of the non-naturals, pregnancy was a state which was associated with rest. However, within a more general movement to promote physical strength, increasing emphasis began to be placed on the beneficial effects of exercise for the mother-to-be.<sup>63</sup> It was not sufficient for girls to include exercise in their general education; they had to maintain a physically active life into marriage and motherhood. It was still argued that violent exercises should be avoided, but the Genevan physician Theodore Tronchin's advice to his patients that exercise was less harmful than rest during pregnancy was taken up in general health literature.<sup>64</sup>

Pinel cited the evidence given in a medical thesis submitted to the University of Leipzig to add weight to his argument that exercise aided childbirth.<sup>65</sup> The author of the thesis, Francius, had asserted that significantly fewer women died in childbirth in Leipzig at the time of his research than previously. According to Francius, external factors such as air, winds, sun and waters, had not altered in the town. Therefore, he argued that the decline in mortality rates must be attributed to an

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<sup>61</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, n. 5, 1787.

<sup>62</sup> Doppet, *Le Médecin philosophe, ouvrage utile à tout citoyen, dans lequel on trouve une nouvelle manière de guérir, puisée dans les affections de l'ame, et la gymnastique* (Turin, 1787), p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 305.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Tronchin, *Un Médecin du xviii siècle: Théodore Tronchin 1709-1781* (Paris, 1906), p. 62. For a discussion of the harmful effects of jolting in a carriage to pregnant women, see Desessartz, p. 33. Ballexserd argued that 'tous efforts et exercices violens' must be avoided during pregnancy. See Ballexserd, *Dissertation sur l'éducation physique des enfans* (Paris, 1762), p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> The dissertation from the University of Leipzig was published in 1785. It was entitled, *Lipsia parturientibus ac puerperis nostris temporibus minus lethisera*, See *Gazette de Santé*, no. 5, 1787.



alteration in ‘la manière de vivre’ of the female inhabitants. Previously, women had lived according to ‘la culture des beaux arts et des talens agréables’ and had neglected bodily exercises. Now, due to the advice of local German doctors, who had identified the dangers of inaction, the women of Leipzig were in constant movement. Thus, he concluded, the mortality rate in childbirth had fallen due to an alteration in the style of life of the women of the town. Pinel argued that this study offered principles that should be applied to all rich women in cities.

In their recommendation of exercise for women, health writers offered an incentive that was not present in discussions of men’s health. Exercise, it was held, made women more attractive. In general discussions of movement, its external effects tended not to be discussed. Rather, medical literature concentrated on describing the internal result of following a régime – physical and moral well-being. As we have seen, Rousseau equated healthiness with attractiveness in women. He attacked what he regarded as the fashionable tendency to view weakness and languor as an appealing feminine quality.<sup>66</sup> Venel announced his allegiance to Rousseau at the outset of his health manual, by quoting the philosopher’s statement that it was not necessary to be ill in order to please. Venel argued in his advice to ‘des filles destinées au mariage’ that strength and good health were essential ingredients of a suitable marriage match. He described the effect of exercise on women’s bodies: ‘le corps se développe, croît, se fortifie, devient souple, adroit, actif, agile et s’embellit’.<sup>67</sup>

Morag Martin, in her research on cosmetics in eighteenth-century France, contends that there was a shift during the course of the century in ideals of female

beauty, from ‘ostentatious gaudiness’ to natural grace. Critics of make-up insisted that ‘beauty was an inner quality which, though discernible on the outside, could not be improved on by artificial means’.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Jourdain, in his *Préceptes de Santé*, maintained that true beauty ‘est fondé sur la nature’ and should not be confused with artificial beauty which, he argued, was created through illusion:

Il faut distinguer la beauté en beauté imaginaire, et en beauté réelle;  
l’une, qui part de notre penchant naturel, ou de notre illusion, et l’autre;  
qui est invariable, toujours de concert avec la belle nature, pour tout dire  
enfin, qui est le vrai beau<sup>69</sup>

According to Martin, the dominant aesthetic of beauty – ‘white skin, red cheeks and a glow of youth and vigour’, was not rejected, ‘but rather the means by which this beauty was acquired’.<sup>70</sup> Within the context of a more natural definition of beauty, exercise was deemed an appropriate means of enhancing attractiveness.

## Women as Consumers of Health

Writing in 1760, Desessartz argued in his *Traité de l’Éducation corporelle des enfans en bas âge* that wealthy people did not look after their health, simply because it was not fashionable to do so: ‘Ce n’est pas la mode, voilà toute la raison qu’on peut alléguer’.<sup>71</sup> Desessartz furthered his criticism of the lifestyle of the wealthy by asserting that men were shorter of stature than they used to be, since it

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<sup>66</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section ‘Sophie’s Body’.

<sup>67</sup> Venel, *Essai sur la santé*, p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> Morag Sarah Martin, University of California, Irvine, ‘Consuming Beauty: The Commerce of Cosmetics in France 1750-1800’ (1999), p. 143.

<sup>69</sup> Jourdain, *Préceptes de santé*, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> Martin, ‘Consuming Beauty’, p. 146.

<sup>71</sup> Desessartz, *Traité de l’éducation*, p. xxx.

was not fashionable for them to strengthen their bodies through exercise. Rather, they had to be shorter in order to be assured of their status within high society: ‘Pour qu’un jeune homme soit aimable aujourd’hui et de compagnie, il faut qu’il soit aussi mignon dans sa taille qu’une jeune Demoiselle; autrement il ne sent point son homme de condition’.<sup>72</sup> However, as Desessartz was writing one physician’s influence had already started to spread in Paris. Inspired by the Genevan physician Théodore Tronchin, the elite of the capital, and women in particular, were taking up a new régime for their health, in which exercise played a central role.

As we have seen, health writers exerted a moral pressure on their readers to physically reform themselves. Publication was one way to negotiate medical authority within the public sphere. Building up a powerful clientele was also a means for the physician to disseminate his particular brand of enlightened medicine. Emma Spary suggests that client and physician were brought together through a network of relations in polite society, with the former bestowing authority on the latter.<sup>73</sup> Lindsay Wilson argues, that due to the nature of the physician’s relationship with his clients, the profession of medicine was particularly ‘susceptible’ to public opinion.<sup>74</sup> Women formed a significant target audience for health literature and were also prominent consumers of health advice. As clients, women were involved in shaping the market for health. However, the case of Tronchin illustrates the problematic position of women within the medical market and highlights the role that fashion was perceived to play in their adoption of any health care régime.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

<sup>73</sup> E. Spary, ‘Self-indulgence: taste, eating and authority in enlightened France’, in her forthcoming book *Eating the Enlightenment*.

<sup>74</sup> See L. Wilson, *Women and Medicine in the French Enlightenment: The Debate over Maladies des Femmes* (Baltimore, 1993), p. 95.



Tronchin gained a reputation in Paris in the 1750s and 1760s for his rejection of harsh remedies in favour of the careful management of the non-naturals. Despite publishing little, and nothing on his conservative régime, Tronchin, like Tissot, was regarded by contemporaries as the epitome of enlightened medicine.<sup>75</sup> Sometime friend to Rousseau, admired by Condorcet, frequenter of Mme Necker's *Salon* and with a list of clients that included Diderot, D'Alembert and Voltaire, Tronchin was a physician who was embraced by the *philosophes*. However, his notoriety in Paris arguably centred upon his appeal amongst his female clientele.

Tronchin was born in 1709. Originally from Provence, his noble family were forced to flee to Geneva because of their Calvinism. However, they maintained close links with Parisian polite society. As a young man, Tronchin travelled to London in order to spend time with Lord Bolingbroke, a family friend. It was Bolingbroke who recommended a medical career to Tronchin, and sent him to Leiden with an introductory letter to Boerhaave. After receiving his doctorate, Tronchin moved to Amsterdam. Here, he had a large clientele and was invited to take up the position of *Premier Médecin* to the Prince of Orange. However, Tronchin declined the offer and returned to Geneva where he became involved in the smallpox inoculation debate.<sup>76</sup> Tronchin was an advocate of the revolutionary treatment and famously penned the *Encyclopédie* article on the subject published in 1765. Inoculation received its most critical endorsement when Tronchin was summoned to Paris in 1756 to inoculate the sons of the Duc d'Orleans. It was at this time that Tronchin first became known in

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<sup>75</sup> Tronchin's only major work was *De Colica Pctonum*, published in 1757. Emma Spary also argues that for his contemporaries, Tronchin epitomised the Enlightenment in medicine. See Spary, 'Self-indulgence: taste, eating and authority in enlightened France'.

<sup>76</sup> For an overview of the smallpox inoculation debate see, L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, Chapter 7, 'The Medical Enlightenment', pp. 470-2.

Paris, and began to build a clientele. Although for the next ten years he refused to leave Geneva permanently, he had clients throughout Europe. However, unlike Tissot who never went to Paris to practice, Tronchin finally succumbed to the request of the Duc d'Orleans to be his *Premier Médecin* in 1766. He returned to Paris, where he lodged at the *Palais Royal*. Between 1756 and his death in 1781, Tronchin exerted a significant influence over the Parisian medical scene.

In 1760, in a letter to the Genevan president Molé, Tronchin wrote: 'Le Médecin ne marche à pas sur qu'en marchant avec la nature'.<sup>77</sup> In championing nature, Tronchin did not simply invoke the therapeutic effects of the environment (sun, fresh air, the scenic view). He also referred to the inner nature of the individual patient. In adherence to Hippocratic methods, Tronchin advocated the use of a régime which would work in harmony with the body. He rejected treatments such as phlebotomy, purgatives and medication in favour of the use of regimen. Thus, Tronchin's natural remedies drew almost exclusively from the non-naturals. Condorcet praised the Genevan for his views on nature, and argued that the physician's duty should be to follow nature in such a manner that his work was indistinguishable from her.<sup>78</sup>

Exercise formed a central part of Tronchin's healthcare advice. The physician was credited with introducing the fashion amongst wealthy women of taking exercise in the morning. Wearing 'les tronchines' (dresses which were shorter in length and did not have a hooped petticoat underneath), women walked in flat shoes, for the purposes of conserving health. To this action was assigned the verb

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<sup>77</sup> Tronchin, *Un Médecin du xviii siècle*, p. 36.

<sup>78</sup> For Condorcet's admiration of Tronchin, see Wilson, *Women and Medicine in the French Enlightenment*, p. 101.

'tronchiner', thus confirming the physician's authorship of this new activity.<sup>79</sup> In addition to walking, Tronchin recommended to his female clients housework, digging in the garden and chopping wood.

Tronchin's influence and popularity in Parisian polite society was controversial. Condorcet said in relation to Tronchin:

L'arrivée d'un médecin célèbre dans une capitale, est presque toujours l'époque d'une révolution dans la médecine. Il apporte avec lui un autre régime, des remèdes inconnus ou inusités et de nouvelles méthodes. On n'adopte pas toujours tout ce qu'il propose; mais il force d'examiner de nouveau, de revenir sur des principes qu'on croyait incontestables; et qu'on suive ou non ses méthodes, l'art doit nécessairement y gagner<sup>80</sup>

Tronchin's presence in Paris certainly unsettled members of the *Faculté de Médecine*. He was regarded as an imposter, despite the fact that his membership of the royal medical household gave Tronchin the right to practice in the Capital without the permission of the Paris Faculty.<sup>81</sup> It has been argued that while Tronchin held the favour of the public, he was treated with contempt by certain members of his profession.<sup>82</sup>

Jean-Baptiste-Louis Chomel, like his father before him, was a prominent member of the *Faculté de Médecine*, and held the title *Médecin Ordinaire du Roi*. In an oblique reference contained in his *Essai Historique sur la Médecine en France*, published in 1762, Chomel attacked Tronchin:

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Tronchin, *Un Médecin du xviii siècle*, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup> See *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*, vol. 7, pp. 370-74.

<sup>81</sup> C. Jones, 'The *Médecins du Roi* at the End of the *Ancien Régime* and in the French Revolution' in V. Nutton (ed.), *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500-1837* (London, 1990), p. 226. Only physicians who obtained their degree from Paris had the automatic right to practice in the Capital.



La postérité aura peine à croire qu'on ait vu à Paris un Médecin étranger, fort à la mode, et fort couru, qui cependant rejettoit de sa méthode, saignées, purgations, lavemens, quinquina, opium, émétique, lait bains, exaux minérales, vésicatoires etc. Toute sa pratique se bornoit à conseiller des frictions, du mouvement, l'exercice, de longues promenades à pied, l'usage du vin, de la viande froide.<sup>83</sup>

Chomel contended that Tronchin's treatments were ineffective, particularly in the case of acute illness. Instead, he argued, they were 'capable seulement d'amuser ceux qui s'imaginent être malades. Aussi ne lui a-t-on vu traiter ou guérir que des femmes, des vaporeux et des mélancholiques'.<sup>84</sup> Chomel criticised Tronchin for the manner in which he related to his clients. He accused him of gaining popularity through flattery and deception. Tronchin's emphasis upon gentle treatment, it was argued, simply pandered to the wishes of his female patients to avoid pain.<sup>85</sup> However, as Spary contends, presenting himself as the client's friend and equal was a means by which Tronchin could negotiate his authority amongst a powerful Parisian elite.<sup>86</sup>

Although Tronchin was denounced as a charlatan by some members of the *Faculté de Paris*, he was careful, as was Tissot, to distance himself from the image of the money-grabbing and unscrupulous unlicensed practitioner. Tronchin argued that the true doctor did not make hollow promises to his patients in order to make his

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<sup>82</sup> Tronchin, *Un Médecin du xviii siècle*, p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> See Jean-Baptiste Louis Chomel, *Essai Historique sur la médecine en France* (Paris, 1762), p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> This criticism is found in the eulogy of the physician Bouvart written by Guenet, submitted to the *Faculté de Médecine* in 1787, where Tronchin is compared unfavourably with Bouvart. See Wilson, *Women and Medicine*, Chapter Four, 'Science, Medicine, and the Salons: A Struggle for Cultural Authority'.

<sup>86</sup> Spary, 'Self-indulgence: taste, eating and authority in enlightened France'.

living. He said: 'Toute la différence qu'il y a alors entre un charlatan et un médecin, c'est que celui-là promet beaucoup et que celui-ci ne promet rien'.<sup>87</sup> Condorcet viewed the relationship that Tronchin and his female clients had fostered as a ground-breaking development in medical practice, which served to encourage the use of remedies such as 'tronchiner'. Through polite conversation, it was held, physician and client were able to follow nature's path more accurately.

In his *De la Santé* published in 1762, Jacquin discussed the remedies that Tronchin had prescribed following his arrival in Paris in 1756. Jacquin referred to what he regarded as a short-lived fashion in Paris where rich women exercised and their vapours disappeared. However, despite the effectiveness of the treatment, their laziness soon returned and with it, presumably, their vapours:

Les meilleurs remèdes que Tronchin ait prescrits, en passant par Paris, aux femmes, et aux gens oisifs, étoit de frotter leur appartement, de scier leur bois, de bêcher leur jardin. Les femmes, par mode, firent pendant quelque temps de l'exercice, et les vapeurs disparurent; la paresse les rappella bientôt.<sup>88</sup>

Jacquin argued that exercise was essential for wealthy urban women. However, he was cynical regarding the ability of women to stick to a régime unless it was considered to be a fashionable activity. Nevertheless, Tronchin did return to Paris four years after the publication of Jacquin's health manual, and reiterated the importance of exercise to health. In addition, it was women's initial endorsement of Tronchin that helped to fuel an interest in exercise which permeated health and

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<sup>87</sup> Letter to Vallier d'Angoulême, Tronchin, *Un Médecin du xviii siècle*, p. 38.

<sup>88</sup> Jacquin, *De la Santé*, p. 241.

educational literature, and which, as we shall see, resulted in practical initiatives which offered exercise to the paying customer.

### **Conclusion – Towards a Universal body**

The accounts of exercise which we have explored in this chapter problematise the recent studies of eighteenth-century medical discourses, which portray a view of women as weak and delicate. Women were singled out by health writers because of their childbearing capability. However, motherhood was not accepted in these health manuals as an explanation for their physical malaise. Rather, their *mollesse* was deemed to be the result of an inactive style of life.

A vigorous health was seen to be achievable for both men and women. It was society (and not nature) which placed limitations upon the strength of women, through the physical activities which were considered suitable for them. Although in general only moderate exercises were recommended, women were now expected to be robust enough to produce healthy offspring, to oversee their children's early education and to manage the household effectively.

Everyone had the capacity to withstand exercise and thus be physically reformed. Weakness, it was argued, was not natural to Mankind; rather it had been introduced through *oisiveté*. According to health writers, the development of a healthy, strong society began with the mother, but continued with the education of children. The importance of physical exercise to new theories of learning, and plans for educational institutions, provides the focus of the next chapter.



## Chapter Five

### *Educating the Citizen*

En un mot, la bonne Education produit des hommes sains, forts, policés, vertueux et heureux: et la mauvaise, des hommes foibles et mal sains, féroces, criminels et malheureux (Jean Verdier, 1777)<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

We have explored the significance of exercise in literature concerned with the physical reform of the individual.<sup>2</sup> In addition, hygiene was integral to discussions of public, or rather, group, education. Physicians became associated with institutional efforts to produce strong and healthy citizens through the use of the non-naturals and conceptions of personal health were couched in the language of social utility. This was furthered within educational debates, where citizenship was accorded a central role.

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise our earlier treatment of the importance of educating the body through an examination of the pertinence of general education to Enlightenment concerns. Education, like health, was a critical domain for the discussion of the perfectibility of man. There was a marked increase in the publication of treatises and manuals concerned with this subject in the second half of the eighteenth century. Whilst just fifty-one books were published between

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Verdier, *Cours d'éducation à l'usage des élèves destinés aux premières professions et aux grands emplois de l'état: contenant les plans d'éducation littéraire, physique, morale et chrétienne, de l'enfance, de l'adolescence et de la première jeunesse; le plan encyclopédique des études: et des réglemens généraux d'éducation* (Paris, 1777), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> See above, Chapter Three, 'The New Hygiene'.

1715 and 1759, this rose to one hundred and sixty-one between 1760 and 1790.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a rise in interest in education occurred concurrently with an increase in literature on health.

Two events in 1762 encouraged the burgeoning preoccupation with the education of man: the closure of the Jesuit collèges and the publication of Rousseau's *Émile*.<sup>4</sup> Both offered opportunities to reconsider the role of education in the improvement of the individual and society. In that year, fifteen books were published on the subject in France, compared with only one the previous year.<sup>5</sup> The new literature focused upon both physical and moral education. Influenced by the new hygiene, educationalists writing at this time placed a greater emphasis upon the development and care of the body.

Concentrating upon the proximity of health and education in discussions concerning the improvement of man, this chapter will underline the involvement of the physician, through his new role of social reformer, in the shaping of pedagogical models. Having explored theoretical discussions of hygiene and the use of the non-naturals, we will go on to chart here their practical implementation in Parisian educational establishments of the 1770s and 1780s. Using the educational enterprises of the physicians Jean Verdier and Guillaume Daignan as particular examples, we will investigate the belief in the power of education to reverse the assumed trend of physical degeneration, and to mould strong citizens for the State.

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<sup>3</sup> H. Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1981), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> See Chisick, *The Limits of Reform*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

## The Treatment of Eighteenth-Century Education

Eighteenth-century France has been identified by historians as a crucial period in the story of modern State education. It has been contended that both the expulsion of the Jesuits and the reforming zeal of the Revolutionary decade encouraged discussion of the implementation of a national and standardized system. A significant literature emerged in the 1970s on various aspects of eighteenth-century French education, from increased levels of literacy and schooling, through studies of higher education, to the instruction of women and the 'people'.<sup>6</sup>

Harvey Chisick, in his ground-breaking work on eighteenth-century educational reform, identifies two principal reasons as to why education held a fundamental place within the Enlightenment project. He argues, firstly, that the dominant Lockean sensationalist psychology, 'implied the virtually unlimited malleability of human nature'.<sup>7</sup> The view of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, proposed by such theories of learning, necessarily afforded education a privileged role in the development of man. As it was argued that the individual was entirely constructed by external influences, so these influences had to be carefully controlled. Secondly, Chisick maintains that education was regarded as a means of social reform and control. Thus, education came to be viewed as a tool for the State in its drive for the improvement of society.

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<sup>6</sup> For general accounts of French education, See R. Chartier, M. M. Compère and D. Julia, *L'Éducation en France du xvi au xviii siècle* (Paris, 1976) and the collection of articles contained in D. Baker (ed.), *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France 1679-1979* (Waterloo, Ontario, 1980). For higher education, see L. W. B. Brockliss, *French Higher Education in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. A Cultural History* (Oxford, 1987). For discussions of women and education, see M. Sonnet, *L'Éducation des filles au temps des lumières* (Paris, 1987) and S. Spencer, 'Women and Education', in id., (ed.), *French Women in the Age of Enlightenment* (Indiana, 1984). For the education of the people, see Chisick, *The Limits of Reform*.

<sup>7</sup> Chisick, *The Limits of Reform*, p. 242.



Chisick's model provides a persuasive framework for understanding the increased interest in education in the second half of the eighteenth century. However, there are two further significant features of Enlightenment education that need to be highlighted and which command little attention in Chisick's account: firstly, the centrality of the body and, secondly, the *demand* for education at various levels of society.

Educational histories are prone to neglect the body. This is due, in part, to their teleological stance. Whether they aim to champion the success of modern systems or, as has been the case more recently, to examine the reasons for their failure, these histories have tended to follow a trajectory towards the development of twentieth-century State schooling.<sup>8</sup> Thus, their accounts are inclined to be dominated by a modern understanding of concepts which, within the culture of eighteenth-century France, were conceived very differently. For example, there is a propensity to view education according to our modern definition as simply instruction. However, in the eighteenth century, the term 'éducation', like its German equivalent 'bildung', referred to the entire development of the individual and therefore had far-reaching implications within an Enlightenment culture of improvement.

Physical education has been similarly neglected. If considered at all, it is isolated from discussions of academic instruction. Conversely, histories of physical education do not integrate their findings into a broader discussion of intellectual development.<sup>9</sup> However, in separating the 'physical' from the 'academic', historians

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the problems of following such a trajectory, see Donald Baker's 'Foreword' in *The Making of Frenchmen*.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, E. W. Gerber, *Innovators and Institutions in Physical Education* (Philadelphia, 1971); F. E. Leonard, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education* (Westport, 1949); P. C. McIntosh and J. G. Dixon et al., *Landmarks in the History of Physical Education* (London, 1981), first

have imposed a set of modern criteria on their examination of earlier understandings of education. As a consequence, the fundamental importance of the body to eighteenth-century French education has been overlooked.

In addition, the term 'physical education' tends to be applied uncritically, using its modern definition as: 'sport', 'exercise' or 'gym'. However, eighteenth-century discussions of physical education, within the Classical tradition, referred to the total care of the body, as opposed to development of the soul. The art of hygiene was used as a model, and consequently the non-naturals were employed as a device with which to structure discussions of physical education. As Leroux commented in his article 'Objet de l'éducation physique', contained in the *Journal d'Éducation* in 1776:

Par l'Education physique (ce terme signifie tout ce qui concerne les corps) on doit se proposer de procurer aux jeunes gens une santé stable, un tempérament vigoureux; de rendre leurs corps robustes, souples, adroits et capables de résister aux fatigues des différens états et à la rigueur des saisons. Le bon air, la propreté, les nourritures sains, et données avec prudence, la sobriété, la gaieté, une douce fermeté de la part des parens et des maîtres, les divers exercices du corps, etc<sup>10</sup>

Although Chisick acknowledges the emerging importance of hygiene and exercise to eighteenth-century educational plans, he does not consider the significance of the body to Lockean ideas of sensate perception. Nevertheless, the

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published in 1957; E. A. Rice and J. L. Hutchinson et al., *A Brief History of Physical Education*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, 1969); J. Ulmann, *De la Gymnastique aux sports modernes: Histoire des doctrines de L'éducation physiques* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1989); D. B. Van Dalen and B. L. Bennett, *A World History of Physical Education: Cultural, Philosophical, Comparative* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Jersey, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> Leroux, 'Objet de l'éducation physique', *Journal d'Éducation*, March 1776, p. 97.

fitness of the body to receive information and to learn effectively was regarded as crucially important. Care of the body, through the use of the principles of hygiene, was considered an integral part of a general education. Penned in the *Encyclopédie* by the tutor and one time lawyer, César Chesneau Dumarsais (1676-1756), the article 'Éducation' offered a definition of the term, coupled with its aims:

c'est le soin que l'on prend de nourrir, d'élever et d'instruire les enfans;  
ainsi l'éducation a pour objets, 1. La santé et la bonne conformation du  
corps; 2. Ce qui regarde la droiture et l'instruction de l'esprit; 3. Les  
mœurs, c'est-à-dire la conduite de la vie, et les qualités sociales.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, it was the combination of a physical and moral education which was believed to hold the key to producing successful citizens. In an advertisement published in 1772 for his *Parisian Etablissement propre à l'Éducation Physique et Morale des Enfants*, Richard de Laudec argued: 'N'est-ce-pas à l'éducation physique et morale tout ensemble, que Sparte dût autrefois ses vertus et son courage, Athènes sa politique et sa gloire?'.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Chisick is inclined to take a 'top down' view of Enlightenment education; one in which the State took the lead in the call for reform. Certainly, a climate of anxiety over military weakness and depopulation fuelled the State's interest in the use of education as a powerful tool of reform and improvement.

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<sup>11</sup> Dumarsais, 'Éducation', Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772), vol. 5, p. 397. Dumarsais was educated at his local Oratorian collège in Marseille. He practised law before becoming a tutor, employed in the services of the Marquis de Maisons, the Marquis de Bauffremont and John Law. His contributions to the *Encyclopédie*, mainly on the subject of grammar, provided him with a much needed income, after his own pension was closed because of his suspected atheism. See F. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as Individuals: a Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford, 1988), p. 119.



However, the demand for instruction came from a variety of sources. For example, peasant communities sought to take control of their economic position through actively seeking tuition in numeracy and literacy.<sup>13</sup> More importantly here, the urban, reading constituents of the public sphere, encouraged by the new literature on health and education, began to demand improved instruction for their families. Education was regarded as a wise investment: 'le plus grand bien que les pères puissent laisser à leurs enfans'.<sup>14</sup>

Calls for a worthier education, which incorporated new ideas about the body, were not met by the State. As we shall explore, grand plans for a national and secular schooling system in France, based upon these new ideals, went largely unrealised. The practical application of new ideas on education came instead from private individuals. These entrepreneurs met and encouraged an existing demand in urban centres for a particular style of instruction. Employing their personal blend of Rousseau, nature and the new hygiene, the Parisian *instituteurs* set up *maisons d'éducation* around the capital. The schools attracted students through extensive marketing. Advertising centred upon the expressed desire to educate strong, healthy and useful citizens for the State. Thus, private educational initiatives were sold as part of a broader patriotic drive to improve French society.

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<sup>12</sup> Laudec, *Etablissement propre à l'éducation physique et morale des enfans, depuis la fin de leur allaitement jusqu'à leur septième année* (Paris, 1772), p. 9. The school was situated just outside Paris, at the Gros-Caillou, Champ-de-Mars.

<sup>13</sup> See, E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1966).

<sup>14</sup> Dumarsais, 'Éducation', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 398.

## Education and the Enlightened State

The expulsion of the Jesuits left a lacuna in French schooling that needed to be filled. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Jesuits were the foremost exponents of humanistic education in Europe. Their teaching focused upon the instruction of Classical Antiquity and Catholic doctrine. However, their widespread influence became increasingly problematic, as European rulers questioned whether their primary loyalty was to the Pope or to the particular head of State in which they resided. In France, the Jesuits were attacked from all sides.<sup>15</sup> The *philosophes* argued that their educational establishments represented a retrograde way of thinking. Within the Catholic church itself they were berated, both by the Jansenists, who accused them of worldliness, and by the Oratorians who, with their emphasis upon modern languages, mathematics and sciences, were critical of their traditional educational stance. Most crucially, the French *Parlements* believed that the Jesuits held too much power, in the form of the education of French citizens. Thus, the Jesuit collèges were closed in 1762, and the Order expelled from France in 1773.<sup>16</sup>

The effect of the removal of the Jesuits from the *collèges* was immediate - it created around 1,250 teaching vacancies. Their expulsion raised not only the practical issue of *who* would teach, but also questions concerning the regulation of French schooling. In light of France's crushing defeat in the Seven Years War, concluded in 1763, the question was raised as to who was best suited to the task of

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<sup>15</sup> For an account of the expulsion of the Jesuits, see D. Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757-1765* (London, 1975).

<sup>16</sup> Charles R. Bailey, *French Secondary Education 1763-1790: The Secularization of Ex-Jesuit Collèges* (Philadelphia, 1978).

training French citizens.<sup>17</sup> There were calls for a national, secular system of education which would be controlled by the State. However, as Charles Bailey has argued in his study on education under the jurisdiction of the *Parlement* of Paris, little was achieved in practice in the latter years of the *Ancien Régime* towards setting up a reformed secular system. According to Bailey, teaching methods and curriculum changed little and the clergy continued to claim authority within the *collèges*.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the educational void left by the expulsion of the Jesuits was filled largely by a debate in print concerning the ideal curriculum and the general importance of education to the improvement of society and the strength of the State.

One of the most prominent contributions to the educational debate which raged in the 1760s was made by Louis-René Caradeuc de La Chalotais (1701-1785), the controversial *Procureur-Général* of the *Parlement* of Brittany who had campaigned for the removal of the Jesuits from France, and for increased autonomy of his region.<sup>19</sup> His *Essai d'Éducation Nationale*, published in 1763, was bound with the anonymous *De l'Éducation Publique* which had appeared separately the previous year.<sup>20</sup> Both texts advocated a national or public education system. De la Chalotais' introduction to his *Essai d'Éducation Nationale*, encapsulated an absolute faith in the unlimited potential of education to strengthen a nation:

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<sup>17</sup> See below, Chapter Six.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *French Secondary Education*.

<sup>19</sup> See H. C. Barnard, *The French Tradition in Education* (Cambridge, 1922), Chapter Seven.

<sup>20</sup> There has been much debate as to who was the author of this work. Barnard, in *The French Tradition in Education*, argues that it was penned by Diderot. Others have maintained that it was Rivard, Diderot's tutor. Chisick contends that the author was likely to have been the Jansenist J. B. L. Crévier. However, the Abbé Coyer's *Plan D'Éducation Publique*, published in 1770, bears a marked similarity to the earlier anonymous work. In addition, the anonymous *De l'Éducation Publique* (p. 184) recommends that an 'Ecole de Commerce' be placed in all commercial towns. As we shall see in the next chapter, Coyer became notorious in the 1750s for his call for the nobility to be allowed to practice in commerce.



Nier la force de l'éducation, c'est nier contre l'expérience la force des habitudes. Que ne pourroit point une institution formée par les loix, et dirigée par des exemples! Elle changeroit en peu d'années les mœurs d'une Nation entiere; chez les Spartiates, elle avoit vaincu la nature même. Il y a un Art de changer la race des animaux; n'y en auroit-il pour perfectionner celle des hommes?<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, as education was such a powerful tool, La Chalotais argued that it was senseless to have a system which was not controlled by the State:

L'éducation devant préparer des Citoyens à l'Etat, il est évident qu'elle doit être relative à sa constitution et à ses loix; elle seroit foncièrement mauvaise, si elle y étoit contraire: c'est un principe de tout bon Gouvernement, que chaque famille particuliere soit réglée sur le plan de la grande famille qui les comprend toutes.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Dumarsais set out the wider significance of a good education. A child's development, he argued, was of great importance 'pour eux-mêmes', in order that they could be useful to society, 'pour leurs familles', as children needed to provide support and honour to their kin and finally, 'pour l'état même, qui doit recueillir les fruits de la bonne éducation que reçoivent les citoyens qui le composent'.<sup>23</sup> In short, a good education should benefit the whole of society, from the individual to the State.

The expulsion of the Jesuits elicited an immediate response from educationalists seeking to offer up their expertise to governmental bodies. In

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<sup>21</sup> Louis-René Caradeuc de la Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale, ou plan d'études pour la jeunesse* (1763), pp. 5-6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

contrast, it has been suggested that the other ‘event’ of 1762 (the publication of Rousseau’s *Émile*) was slower to influence educational theory. According to Jean Bloch, the exiled philosopher’s influence was gradual, rising to a crescendo in the Revolutionary period, as signified by the cult of Rousseau.<sup>24</sup> According to Bloch, writers such as La Chalotais were not influenced by *Émile*, because they did not directly allude to it.

Rousseau differed to a certain extent from other educationalists in his insistence upon considering private, rather than public, education.<sup>25</sup> The Abbé Coyer (1708-1782), tutor to the duc de Bouillon and prominent campaigner for the right of the nobility to practice in commerce, published his *Plan d’Éducation Publique* in 1770.<sup>26</sup> Here, he questioned the wisdom of Rousseau’s preoccupation with the ‘natural’ man:

Pourquoi encore, au lieu de s’occuper uniquement de l’homme de la Nature, ne s’est-il pas attaché à la formation de l’homme de société? Il faut, sans doute, s’éloigner le moins qu’il est possible de la Nature, cette mere commune qui punit toujours les ingrats qui l’abandonnent. Mais enfin il est nécessaire de la plier au bien général de la société; et de ne pas blesser celle-ci, en soutenant les droits de celle-là<sup>27</sup>

However, as we have already established, *Émile* had an immediate impact upon health writing. Furthermore, both health and educational treatises drew on a common set of ideals, concerned with the improvement of humanity. Educationalists

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<sup>23</sup> Dumarsais, ‘Éducation’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, 397.

<sup>24</sup> J. Bloch, *Rousseauism and Education in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section ‘Rousseau’s Social Project’.

<sup>26</sup> Coyer’s involvement in the polemic on the function of the nobility will be treated in the following chapter.

may not have necessarily agreed with Rousseau, but his work was influential, nonetheless. As we shall see, the importance which Rousseau placed upon the practice of hygiene is clearly reflected in works promoting a national education.

I want to suggest that the reasons for the educationalists' reluctance to engage with Rousseau were essentially political, and lay with the nature of the audience to which their publications were addressed. Health writers such as Jourdain, Pressavin and Venel wrote for essentially the same readership that had relished *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The quoting of 'Jean-Jacques' was an effective selling feature in these works, intended for consumption by the private individual. In contrast, treatises such as La Chalotais' *Essai d'Éducation Nationale* were addressed to the public institutions. It made little sense, when appealing to a governing body such as the Paris *Parlement*, to quote from a book which the same authority had only recently banned. Rousseau may have been the champion of the public sphere, but the Government's stance was one of disapproval towards a proven heretic. Thus, the apparent absence of *Émile* in these studies should not blind us to the impact of Rousseau and, consequently, the influence of Lockean sensationalist ideas which privileged physical education.

The development of the body was an important feature of the treatises, produced in response to the closure of the Jesuit *collèges*. Coyer, in his *Plan d'Éducation Publique*, claimed: 'la santé est un don de la nature, qui dépérit si on ne l'entretient pas'.<sup>28</sup> As we shall see, the French army was a particular target of calls for an improved physical education: strong soldiers needed to be trained.<sup>29</sup> More

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<sup>27</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique* (Paris, 1770), pp. ix-x.

<sup>28</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> See below, Chapter Six.



generally, exercise was regarded as a crucial component of an effective public education system. Coyer detailed elaborate spaces for exercise in his plans for new schools, to be built outside of the city in order to benefit from purer air.

La Chalotais argued that, 'L'éducation morale ne doit pas contredire l'éducation physique; car c'est l'homme entier qu'il s'agit de former'.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the author of *De l'Éducation Publique* stated: 'Il y a une ame et un corps à former'.<sup>31</sup> Henri IV's successful reign, held up by eighteenth-century commentators as a model of patriotism where a true balance of power between king and subjects had been achieved, was accredited to the combined physical and moral education of the young prince. His body was often used as an example of health and strength. Coyer, in his discussion of the importance of physical education, claimed:

Tel fut Henri IV. Et sans cette verdure, cette vigueur, cette force de tempérament, fruit de l'Education mâle et populaire qu'il avoit reçue, eût-il pu soutenir tant de travaux qui le portèrent sur le Trône, et donnerent à la Nation un pere dans un Roi? La santé est la base de tous les talens et de tous les jouissances.<sup>32</sup>

In these discussions of exercise, modern activities were compared unfavourably with ancient practices. As we have seen, this was a feature of discussions of exercise in the health literature.<sup>33</sup> Dainville has argued that whilst exercise was a prominent feature of Jesuit education in the sixteenth century, by the eighteenth century, its importance in schools had declined.<sup>34</sup> There were calls by

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<sup>30</sup> La Chalotais, *Essai éducation nationale*, p. 130.

<sup>31</sup> *De l'éducation publique* (Amsterdam, 1762), p. xii.

<sup>32</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique*, p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> See above, Chapter Three, Section 'The Cult of Antiquity'.

<sup>34</sup> F. de Dainville, *L'Éducation des Jésuites (XVI-XVIII siècles)*, (Paris, 1978), p. 525.

eighteenth-century commentators for the resurrection of Classical models of education which had privileged bodily development. Within Ancient Greek culture, the gymnasium had been an indispensable part of social life. La Chalotais called for a modern manual on gymnastics to be written:

L'institution sensée d'une Nation telle que la nôtre, mériterait bien un traité pratique de Gymnastique, ou d'exercices comme ceux des Grecs; les Carousels et les Tournois, quoique plus agréable que nos jeux de hazard, n'avoient ni le même but, ni la même utilité.<sup>35</sup>

Theoretical debates on a public or national education system, like Rousseau's *Émile*, placed an important emphasis upon exercising the body in childhood, in order to produce healthy, strong and useful adults.

### **Education and the Public Sphere**

Writers such as La Chalotais and Dumarsais firmly connected the importance of education to the needs of the State. A reformed education, they argued, held the key to a stronger State through the development of improved citizens. Thus, the development of the individual was a matter of concern for the whole of society. The physician Raulin wrote, in praise of an educational establishment set up by Richard de Laudec in 1772: 'le projet d'éducation, que propose l'Auteur de cet Ouvrage, est digne d'un vrai citoyen. Il n'est rien de plus précieux à l'Etat et à la société, que l'art de disposer les enfans à devenir des hommes utiles'.<sup>36</sup> However, as the case of Laudec's *maison d'éducation* indicates, the State did not have the monopoly on the production of citizenship. The demand for education was met and encouraged within

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<sup>35</sup> La Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale*, p. 131.

the public sphere. In this wider market-place, individual entrepreneurs promoted private educational establishments which promised the production of healthy and useful citizens. Laudec, in the promotion of his school, stated that the *Lieutenant général de Police* had given his approval of the establishment, precisely because its aim was, ‘à préparer à la Patrie des Citoyens vertueux et robustes’.<sup>37</sup>

Pedagogical information was circulated in manuals, journals and newspapers, as well as through public meetings. Prominent in discussions of physical education was the *Société Royale de Médecine*, which announced an essay competition on this very theme in its *séance publique* of 11 March 1783. The 600 livres prize posed the question: ‘Quels sont en France les abus à réformer dans l’éducation physique, et quel est le régime le plus propre à fortifier le tempérament et à prévenir les maladies des enfans, au égard aux usages et aux différentes températures?’.<sup>38</sup> The prize was split between three physicians; Munnicks, Bret and Amoureux fils.<sup>39</sup> However, it was a non-winning contestant, the Montpellier physician Jean-Baptiste-Timothée Baumès, who went on to gain a reputation as an expert on child health.<sup>40</sup> Clearly influenced by the work of Rousseau and Tissot, he wrote of exercise:

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<sup>36</sup> Richard de Laudec, *Etablissement propre à l’éducation physique et morale des enfans, depuis la fin de leur allaitement jusqu’à leur septième année* (Paris, 1772), ‘avertissement’.

<sup>37</sup> de Laudec, *Etablissement propre à l’éducation physique et morale des enfans*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> See *Histoire de la Société Royale de Médecine, avec les mémoires de médecine et de physique médicale pour les mêmes années*, Année 1780 (Paris, 1786), pp. 23-24. For the announcement of the prizes see, *Histoire de la Société Royale de Médecine*, Années 1782-3 (Paris, 1787), pp. 2-3.

<sup>39</sup> The first prize of 300 livres went to M. Munnicks, a physician from Gronigue, Holland. Vinold Munnicks was born in 1744. He was a student of Camper and Van Doeveren. He received his doctorate in 1769 and became a lecturer in anatomy. The second prize of 200 livres went to M. Bret, a physician from Arles. The third prize of 100 livres went to M. Amoureux fils, a Montpellier physician. Pierre-Joseph Amoureux was born in Beaucaire in 1741. His father was also a physician and took up a teaching post at Montpellier. Amoureux fils took his doctorate at Montpellier in 1762. For the winning essays see, SRM 134-34 d., SRM 136 d. 17. N. 1-8, SRM 120 d. 2.

<sup>40</sup> See SRM 120 d. 2. N. 1. Baumès was born in Lunel in 1756. He submitted his doctorate at Montpellier in 1777. After practising in Saint-Gille, Lunel and Nîmes, he obtained a chair of medicine at Montpellier in 1790.



La gymnastique fait la premiere partie de l'éducation physique. Son objet est de regler les mouvemens extérieurs les plus propres a developper et perfectionner les mouvemens volontaires; a configurer le corps humain de la maniere la plus propre a donner de la vigueur pour toutes les fonctions, de l'agilité aux membres et de l'adresse aux mains.<sup>41</sup>

The essays on physical education submitted to the *Société Royale de Médecine* indicate the importance of exercise as a topic to both the medical community and lay-readers.

The general demand for schooling, which incorporated a reformed physical education, was also reflected in the pages of the Paris *Affiches*. This advertising journal, published daily in the 1780s, provided a space for Parisian entrepreneurs of all kinds to advertise their products. Here, educational establishments were often promoted. A Monsieur Dubuse advertised his *Maison d'éducation* in the *Affiches* in 1785. Approved by the *Intendant* of Paris, it was to be found 'agréablement située' in Vincennes, next to the forest. The school offered its students a range of traditional subjects, including Latin, History, Mathematics, dancing and fencing. However, the focus was upon a natural education, with Dubuse taking his students on field trips or 'les travaux ruraux', on which students would learn about nature whilst out walking.<sup>42</sup> Physical exercise was of key importance at this *pension*. Dubuse announced in the *Affiches* that a public display of gymnastics or what he termed 'l'art d'exercer le corps à l'instar des Romains', would be given at the school on 8 September 1785. This event was to be held in conjunction with a scientific

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<sup>41</sup> Baumès, 'Memoire sur l'éducation physique', p. 128, SRM 120 d. 2. N. 1.

<sup>42</sup> 'Avis divers', *Affiches, Annonces et Avis Divers, ou Journal Général de France*, Monday 16 May, 1785 (136), p. 1311.

demonstration and a musical concert, ‘dans lequel plusieurs élèves chanteront et joueront de div. Instrumens’. Tickets for the event could be purchased in advance from the school.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, due to inclement weather, the display was postponed until the following week, when the event was to run from eleven until four.<sup>44</sup> Dubuse’s *pension* was a success and another ‘Exercice Gymnastique’, consisting of ‘des évolutions, des assauts d’armes...le jeu de l’arc, la danse et la course’, was announced in the *Affiches* in October 1789.<sup>45</sup>

Educational entrepreneurs such as Dubuse drew on Classical models of education and incorporated the use of display, in common with other Enlightenment enterprises. The practice of inviting the public to witness an establishment’s activities was widespread in the 1770s and 80s.<sup>46</sup> The *Affiches* issued public invitations to view the numerous displays of the scientific, philanthropic or simply curious activities that took place around the capital. To take one example, the ‘Ecole Gratuite des Aveugles’ regularly announced public displays of its patriotic work in the pages of the *Affiches*.<sup>47</sup> This practice did not simply bring in additional revenue (a small charge for attendance was generally required); the inclusion of the public was also seen to be a way of legitimising one’s project. It was not enough for Parisian officials to give their approval; the support of the paying public was equally critical.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Friday 2 September 1785 (245), p. 2359.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., Saturday 10 September 1785 (253), p. 2431.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Annonces Particulieres’, *Affiches*, Saturday 3 October 1789 (176), p. 2825.

<sup>46</sup> For discussions of the public displays of scientific activities, see D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994) and S. Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp. 126-27.

<sup>47</sup> See for example, ‘Avis divers’, *Affiches*, Wednesday 20 April 1785 (110), p. 1046.

<sup>48</sup> The difficulty of gaining official approval and permission for an establishment in Paris will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

The *maisons d'éducation* of the physicians Jean Verdier and Guillaume Daignan, which will provide the focus for the remainder of the chapter, need to be viewed within the context of a range of private initiatives which were advertised in the *Affiches* and other widely circulated publications. Both Verdier and Daignan exploited the press extensively to promote their institutions.<sup>49</sup> They also published personal accounts of their educational objectives. Verdier and Daignan differed in their approach, and their schools offered contrasting curriculums. Verdier foregrounded his *active* role as the expert *médecin-instituteur*, while Daignan preferred to describe his medical role in a more passive light, as a servant of nature. However, their main objectives were identical: to produce healthy and strong adults, through an emphasis upon physical education. Verdier and Daignan worked from the premise that Mankind had degenerated and as a consequence, children inherited a weak constitution from their parents. Both men regarded an improved physical education and the implementation of the 'new hygiene' to be central to the development of healthy children.

The examples of Verdier and Daignan are demonstrative of the key features of Enlightenment education with which this chapter is concerned. Both cases highlight the role of the physician in the debates surrounding education and in the practical application of new theories. The centrality of the body to reformed

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<sup>49</sup> For example, Daignan's *Gymnastique* was discussed in a range of different journals. See Reviews of Daignan's *Tableau des Variétés de la Vie Humain*, in *Gazette de Santé*, (1787), no. 12, pp.45-46, no. 15, p. 59; review of Daignan's *Tableau des variétés de la vie humaine*, in *Nouvelles ou Annales de l'art de guérir: a l'usage des gens du monde* (1788), tom. iv, pp. 75-84; 'Avis Divers', *Affiches*, Monday 27 August 1787 (239), pp. 2390-91; 'Annonces Particulieres', *Affiches*, Monday 5 May 1788 (126), p. 1294; review of Daignan's *Tableau des variétés de la vie humaine*, in *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie*, February 1787, pp. 325-32; 'Etablissement Utile', *Journal Encyclopédique*, September 1787, pp. 346-49. Daignan also had a copy of his prospectus distributed with the *Journal de Paris* on 8 and 10 August 1786.



educational models enabled the physician to carve out a role for himself as a pedagogical expert within the market-place.

### **The Physician as Educator**

*Médecin Ordinaire* of the King of Poland and *Avocat* of the Paris *Parlement*, Jean Verdier was born in 1735 in La Ferté-Bernard, Maine. He was known in Parisian medical circles for his work on medical law, notably his *Essai sur la Jurisprudence de la Médecine*, published in 1763.<sup>50</sup> Trained in medicine and law, Verdier was regarded by his fellow physicians as ideally suited to a career in this area of research. However, as the medical biographer and physician Eloy noted in 1778, Verdier was to pursue an entirely different area of interest:

Il s'est appliqué à un tout autre genre d'étude; et après avoir long-tems réfléchi sur la maniere de penser des Anciens, qui regardoient l'éducation physique, comme la base de ses autres parties, il est parvenu à prouver que nous n'aurons jamais d'éducation, à moins que le Médecin ne devienne instituteur, ou que l'instituteur ne devienne physiologiste.<sup>51</sup>

Verdier outlined his aims for a fusion of the arts of medicine and education in his *Cours d'Education*, published in 1777. He also founded a school in which he could test his theories. Established around 1774, Verdier's *maison d'éducation* was situated at the Hôtel de Magni, which was on the Rue de Seine Saint Victor, next to the Jardin du Roi.

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<sup>50</sup> The following year, Verdier also published his *Jurisprudence particuliere de la chirurgie en France* (Paris, 1764).

<sup>51</sup> N. F. J. Eloy, *Dictionnaire historique de la médecine ancienne et moderne* (Mons, 1778), vol. 4, p. 503. This phrase was taken from Verdier's *Cours d'éducation* and also reproduced in a review of the work contained in the *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie*, April 1778, p. 290.

Guillaume Daignan was born in Lille in 1732. He obtained his doctorate in medicine from Montpellier. In 1757, he entered the service of the army and was employed in various hospitals around France. When he arrived in Paris, he was made *Médecin Ordinaire du Roi*. In 1786, Daignan published his *Tableau des Variétés de la Vie Humaine*. This work focused upon the means of improving the state of degeneration which Daignan had identified in the human species. Closely following Tissot, he argued that the main causes of the deterioration of humankind were premature, delayed or badly matched marriages, the poverty of the people, the corruption of morals, the bad physical and moral education of children, childhood illnesses and the ‘false’ application of medicine. Daignan argued that the degeneration of people could be combatted by strengthening their health. This could be achieved through changes to physical and moral education, and by the improvement of medicine, through adherence to nature.<sup>52</sup>

According to Daignan, it was the positive response of the public to his *Tableau des Variétés de la vie humaine* which persuaded him to put his educational theories into practice: ‘Flatté de l’accueil que le public a fait au tableau des variété de la vie humaine, j’ai cru que pour rendre cet ouvrage encore plus utile, je devois ajouter l’exemple au précepte’.<sup>53</sup> Daignan announced in the *Affiches* on 5 May 1788 that, despite his lack of financial resources, he had decided to open an establishment in Paris at the Etoile de Chaillot. The review of the school contained in the *Annales*

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<sup>52</sup> See the Review of Daignan’s *Tableau des variétés de la vie humaine*, in *Journal de Médecine* (February 1787, pp. 325-32), and advertising article in the *Affiches*, Monday 9 July 1787 (190), pp. 1934-35).

<sup>53</sup> Daignan, *Gymnastique des enfans convalescens, infirmes, foibles et délicats, faisant suite au tableau des variété de la vie humaine* (Paris, 1787), ‘avertissement’.

*de l'Art de Guérir* described it as, 'le fruit des réflexions qui on dicté l'excellent livre de M. Daignan'.<sup>54</sup>

Daignan and Verdier had received their medical training from highly respected institutions. Both invested further in their medical career through the purchase of the title *Médecin du Roi*.<sup>55</sup> They had carved out successful career niches for themselves; Verdier in legal medicine, Daignan in military medicine. However, both men chose to move into unknown territory and took the financial risk of setting up their own schools. Their aim was to provide a demonstration of their educational theories, to prove that their methods were successful in practice.

### **Jean Verdier's *Maison d'Éducation***

Verdier placed his blend of education and medicine at the heart of his objective - to correct a frail constitution - which he argued was largely the result of hereditary weakness:

Le vice aujourd'hui le plus commun parmi nos compatriotes, est cette constitution tendre, foible et cacochyme, que les enfans doivent à leurs parents, à leurs Nourrices, quelquefois à leurs Maîtres et à leurs Institutuers. Les préjugés les moins fondés sont désespérer de corriger ces tempéramens; et des moyens pusillanimes auxquels le tendresse, souvent peu éclairée des parens croit devoir recourir, condamnent en effect leur misérables enfans à une vie éternellement languissante et

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<sup>54</sup> Review of Daignan's *Gymnastique*, in *Annales de l'art de guérir*, tom. iv, p. 426.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of medical appointments at court and their career implications, see C. Jones, 'The *Médecins du Roi* at the End of the *Ancien Régime* and in the French Revolution' in V. Nutton (ed.), *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500-1837* (London, 1990), pp. 209-61.



douloureuse. Cependant la corrections de ces constitutions est le triomphe de l'Education physique et de la Médecine économique.<sup>56</sup>

He advocated a Lockean education, whereby the child's heart and spirit could be strengthened through physical means. He proposed to combine the arts of education and medicine, arguing that it was, 'par l'exercice de ces deux arts réunis que Henri IV reçut cette constitution athlétique'.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the *instituteur* had also to be the physician in order to render children robust.

According to Verdier, a sound physiological knowledge was necessary to be a good educator. He was critical of the way in which physical education was treated by authors who, he declared, wrote, 'd'après une expérience vague, toujours imparfaites, et souvent trompeuse'.<sup>58</sup> In Verdier's opinion, the teacher needed to apply a medical knowledge of the body to the process of producing healthy children:

La physiologie, ou la Science de la nature humaine, doit donc devenir entre les mains de l'Instituteur une science pratique, dont l'objet est de former la machine animale la plus parfaite; et si les Médecins ont établi une Pathologie pour reconnoître les vices des fonctions qui altèrent la santé, les Instituteurs en doivent créer une autre pour détruire les vices qui altèrent l'humanité même, sans paroître toucher à la santé.<sup>59</sup>

It was the six non-naturals which were to provide a framework for promoting health in Verdier's *maison d'éducation*. Verdier argued that whilst doctors had studied the

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<sup>56</sup> Verdier, *Cours d'éducation a l'usage des eleves destinés au premières professions et aux grands emplois de l'etat: contenant les plans d'education littéraire, physique, morale et chrétienne, de l'enfance, de l'adolescence et de la première jeunesse; le plan encyclopédique des etudes: et des réglement généraux d'education* (Paris, 1777), pp. 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> Verdier, *Cours d'éducation*, p. 67.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56.

‘six agents de la vie’,<sup>60</sup> and understood their effect upon health, it was the teacher who was best placed to regulate their use:

Les instituteurs qui sont plus à portée que les Médecins de régler l’usage de ces ressorts, doivent donc en étudier, approfondir et suivre plus qu’eux-mêmes leurs effets utiles ou nuisibles au développement et à la perfection des organes et de leurs fonctions.<sup>61</sup>

The non-natural ‘movement’ was thus central to Verdier’s proposal for bodily improvement: ‘C’est un principe avoué de tous les médecins, que la vie ne s’entretient que par le mouvement; et que le repos est le plus ennemi de l’humanité’.<sup>62</sup> Verdier’s plan was to be implemented within a controlled environment. According to the physician, it was far preferable to be educated in a purpose-built school than in the family home, where physical and moral dangers presented themselves at every turn. In contrast to Rousseau’s *Émile*, Verdier’s students were protected from harming themselves. For example, fighting and ‘tous plaisirs tumultueux’ were proscribed.<sup>63</sup>

Verdier reacted against what he referred to as the ‘negative’ instruction which had recently become popular in France. By this, he meant the tendency of authors such as Rousseau to declare nature as their sole educational guide. Of course, as we have seen, the term nature had a range of uses, all of which demanded human intervention and interpretation. Nevertheless, Verdier preferred to be explicit in his use of terms such as ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’. Education, he contended, should be

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<sup>60</sup> Jean Verdier, *Discours sur l’éducation nationale, physique et morale des deux sexes* (Paris, 1792), p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Verdier, *Cours d’éducation*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> Verdier, *Mémoire à consulter, sur les fonctions et les droits respectifs des trois Classes d’Instituteurs établis en France pour les trois ordres de l’Etat* (Paris, 1779), p. 349.

both. It had to be natural in the sense that it followed the laws of nature, but artificial in that it was necessary for man to intervene in the development of children: ‘l’art peut seul remplir les vues de cette nature impuissante par elle-même’.<sup>64</sup> Verdier’s approach signifies a reluctance to abandon figures such as Andry de Bois Regard (whose work he admired), whilst simultaneously embracing the importance of a supervised natural régime:

Le médecin et l’instituteur doivent diriger toutes ses actions et toutes les influences qu’il doit recevoir, non-seulement pour éviter les effets de cette soule de dangers qui l’environnent sans cesse, mais pour faire tourner à son profit cette multitude infinie de mixtes naturels et artificiels, que la nature et l’industrie ont produits pour le développer et le perfectionner.<sup>65</sup>

Verdier’s *maison d’éducation* provided a purpose-built environment in which to offer children a physical and moral education. A review of his *Cours d’Éducation* in the *Journal de Médecine* in April 1778 described his school thus:

On le voit en effet réunir, à grand frais, tous les moyens qu’elle indique, dans une maison, superbe, spacieuses et bien située (a côté du Jardin du Roi). Une bibliothèque bien garnie, un cabinet muni de machines de mathématique et de physique, de substances d’histoire naturelle, de productions des arts; un sallon orné des portraits des grands hommes, de médailles, de tables d’histoire, de cartes géographiques; un jardin botanique, un gymnase, des maîtres pour toutes les parties des études

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<sup>63</sup> Verdier, *Cours d’éducation*, p. 60.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



scholastiques, des gouverneurs pour les différentes parties de l'éducation: voilà les instrumens de toutes les opérations dont son zele, sa science et son expérience assurent les succès.<sup>66</sup>

Whilst Verdier regarded his educational approach as innovatory, reaction to his school was mixed. The *Journal de Médecine* was generous in its praise of him:

Nous souhaitons que les médecins favorisent un travail aussi utile, et, pour remplir le plan de notre journal, nous les invitons, et particulièrement M. Verdier, à l'enrichir des observations physiques qu'ils seront sur un art qui commence à interesser puissamment les peuples savans<sup>67</sup>

However, in his *Discours sur l'Éducation Nationale* addressed to the National Convention in 1792, Verdier referred to the cruel attacks that more traditional scholars had made against his new style of teaching.<sup>68</sup> According to this text, these men had criticised his emphasis upon gymnastics. He answered them thus: 'Qu'ils étoient donc ignorants, ces scholastiques, qui ont voulu jeter du ridicule sur cet art!'.<sup>69</sup> Writing in 1792, Verdier regarded 'l'Hygiene et la Gymnastique' to be essential to the education of 'l'homme-citoyen'.

In defence of his new method of schooling, Verdier also argued that the lack of physical education in schools contributed to the wider problem of depopulation, thus undermining the strength and power of the State:

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<sup>65</sup> Review of Verdier's *Cours d'éducation*, in *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie*, April 1778, p. 292. For Verdier's admiration of Andry, see *Cours d'éducation*, p. 63.

<sup>66</sup> Review of Verdier's *Cours d'éducation*, *Journal de Médecine, Chirurgie, Pharmacie*, April 1778, pp. 301-2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Verdier, *Discours sur l'éducation nationale*, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

En Voilà assez sur l'Hygiène et la Gymnastique, pour être en droit de conclure que le défaut d'Education physique nuit extrêmement à la population. ...Ainsi bannir l'Education physique des maisons des instituteurs, les réduire à répéter des rudimens et des cahiers, c'est en avilissant leur profession, vouloir tarir en même temps les sources fécondes d'où la Nation attend ses sujets, sa force et sa puissance.<sup>70</sup>

Verdier considered his educational experiment to be a resounding success. Children, he claimed, arrived at his institution weak, and left in vigorous health.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, this self-congratulation was well founded, as the school remained in business for approximately twenty years before it was shut down during the Revolutionary decade. Verdier then returned to his earlier career, teaching legal medicine at the *Académie de Législation*.

### **Guillaume Daignan's *Gymnastique des Enfants***

By setting up his *pension* Daignan wished, like Verdier, to demonstrate his ability to strengthen a weak constitution. The establishment, which Daignan termed a *Gymnastique* (referring to Ancient Roman buildings designed for exercise) was intended for convalescents, or weak and delicate children. He deliberately chose 'les petits êtres de notre espèce les plus maltraités', in order give the most stringent of tests to his theory – that children could be strengthened 'sans employer d'autre moyens que les ressources de la nature même'.<sup>72</sup> Thus, in contrast to Verdier (and in line with Rousseau), Daignan framed his educational methods solely in terms of the

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<sup>70</sup> Verdier, *Mémoire à consulter*, pp. 353-54.

<sup>71</sup> Verdier provided a history of the fortunes of his *Maison d'éducation* in his work on the perfectability of man. See Jean Verdier, *Recueil de mémoires et d'observations sur la perfectibilité de l'homme par les agens physiques et moraux* (Paris, 1772), pp. 138-56.

power of nature. His medical style was based upon Hippocratic ideals, wherein the application of medicine ‘ne peuvent être salutaires que lorsqu’ils sont indiqués par la nature même’.<sup>73</sup> Daignan regarded ‘l’abus des remèdes’ to be a contributory factor to the weak constitution of modern man.<sup>74</sup>

Daignan’s aim was to combine a physical and moral education within a ‘natural’ environment: ‘L’objet de cet établissement est de développer en même tems les facultés physiques et morales des enfans, en les exerçant sans gêne, sans contrainte, et en plein air’.<sup>75</sup> The students would learn about the world as they strengthened their bodies. The institution consisted of four gardens: the first for boys under the age of seven, the second for adolescents, the third for young girls and the fourth for boys from puberty to adulthood. Daignan wanted his students to learn through experience. Like Rousseau’s *Émile*, they were to learn entirely from nature, ‘sans Maître, sans livres et sans écritures’. Through observation and play, the children would be able to distinguish the three kingdoms of the natural world and, in this way, would learn whilst becoming physically fitter through fresh air and exercise. Through the employment of a policy of emulation, children were encouraged to learn as they competed for prizes. Daignan argued: ‘L’indifférence dans les enfans est le signe de la stupidité’.

In common with Verdier, Daignan employed the non-naturals, or what he termed, ‘l’usage des six choses nécessaires à l’homme’, as the principal means of

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<sup>72</sup> *Affiches*, Monday 27 August 1787 (239), pp. 2390-91.

<sup>73</sup> Review of Daignan’s *Tableau des variétés de la vie humaine*, in *Journal de Médecine*, February 1787, p. 327.

<sup>74</sup> Review of Daignan’s *Tableau des variétés de la vie humaine*, in *Nouvelles ou Annales de l’art de guérir: A l’usage des gens du monde* (1788), tom. iv, p. 75. For a further discussion of the danger posed by incompetent doctors, see review of Daignan’s *Tableau de la vie humain*, *Gazette de Santé*, (1787), no. 12, pp.45-46.

<sup>75</sup> *Affiches*, Monday 5 May 1788 (126), p. 1294.



curing a weak constitution: 'L'homme même ne devoit avoir besoin d'aucun autre secours que ceux-là, dispensés d'un manière convenable'.<sup>76</sup> It was 'l'air' and 'le mouvement' which were at the heart of Daignan's educational plan:

Pour l'air, on a choisi un lieu champêtre, agréable et isolé, où il est aussi salubre qu'il soit possible de le desirer, et de toutes part éloigné de ce qui peut l'alterer. Pour le mouvement, il y a un lieu d'exercices, qui est un jardin où les Enfants seront en tout liberté, à l'abri des injures du tems.<sup>77</sup>

However, other curative practices were employed at the school, including a variety of baths, showers, fumigations and lotions.<sup>78</sup> According to Daignan's prospectus, a physician, surgeon and apothecary would reside at the *Gymnastique* to oversee all of these procedures, which would only be carried out with parental permission.

Daignan offered *nature* in a carefully controlled environment. He handpicked the contents of each garden, including the 'nature' that the children could find in each one. Thus, their supposedly 'natural' environment was carefully orchestrated. Most crucially, Daignan removed all risk and danger from his establishment. Unlike that of Rousseau, Daignan's nature was completely safe.

Nature also came at a price. Children were to pay 1 livre 16 sous per day to attend the *Gymnastique*. Once inside, the children would be free to stay for as long as they wished and to come and go as they pleased. Convalescent or delicate adults would also be admitted, along with the generally curious. The *Gymnastique* was also equipped to house children and young people on a permanent basis.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Review of Daignan's *Gymnastique*, in *Nouvelles ou Annales de l'art de guerir*, tom. iv, p. 427.

<sup>77</sup> *Affiches*, Monday 27 August 1787 (239), pp. 2390-91.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Affiches*, 'Annonces Particulieres', Monday 5 May 1788 (126), p. 1294.

It is not clear whether Daignan's school was a success. It certainly generated widespread interest in the capital when it opened in 1788. However, the venture did not have sufficient time to establish itself before the economic climate changed with the Revolution. As with Verdier, Daignan became involved in the renewed debate on national education at the outset of the Revolution. He submitted his *Réflexions d'un Citoyen* to the Estates General in 1789. Daignan also returned to his earlier career interest; combining his military experience and his work on physical education, he published *Gymnastique Militaire* in 1790.<sup>80</sup> Then, utilising his earlier service in the Seven Years War, Daignan sat on the *Comité de Santé aux Armées* until his retirement in 1807.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

Whilst Daignan and Verdier provided contrasting explanations for their educational theories, their goals and methods were practically identical; to produce healthy and strong children using hygienic principles or, more precisely, the correct use of the non-naturals. Both offered a highly controlled environment within which the child's development could be monitored; a natural education had to be supervised. Furthermore, the examples of Daignan and Verdier highlight the entrepreneurial spirit which accompanied a rise in the status of health and education within the enlightened public sphere. To the case of the *maison d'éducation* can be added the *école de natation*, to be explored in Chapter Seven. Most importantly

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<sup>80</sup>Daignan, *Gymnastique militaire, ou essai sur les moyens de rendre nos soldats sains, robustes, forts, adroits, tous les exercices du corps, dressés au maniment de toutes sortes d'armes et propres soutenir toutes les fatigues de la guerre*, (Bescançon, 1790).

<sup>81</sup> Jones, 'The Médecins du Roi', p. 246.

here, Daignan and Verdier regarded a reformed physical education as crucial in combatting the degenerative state of the modern body.

Debates surrounding the education of children formed part of a wider drive for improvement which, as I have argued, also focused upon elite women and the military nobility. Education was regarded as a tool which could reform the whole of society. Having explored debates pertaining to the physical reform of women (mothers), the next chapter will discuss the importance of the military nobility to revitalised concepts of bodily strength and fitness.



## Chapter Six

### *Exercising Nobility*

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter we explored eighteenth-century discussions of the essential malleability of humankind, and the power of education to transform individuals, both physically and morally. However, despite the universalist rhetoric employed, these debates tended to focus upon the upper echelons of French society. This was partly because there were limits to the degree to which educationalists regarded lower sections of society as capable of enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> In practice, it was generally understood that individuals should only be educated according to their social position. Writings also focused upon the wealthy because it was they who were seen to be most in need of reform. (In addition, the wealthy were the most likely consumers of educational advice.) This was particularly the case in debates concerning the education of the body. However, examinations of physical reform did not simply centre upon wealth. They were also meaningful in discussions of legal status. Literature concerning exercise was relevant to a more specific exchange concerned with the reform of the Second Estate, and more particularly with the military nobility.

In the eighteenth century, the nobility made up approximately 0.5 per cent of the population of France.<sup>2</sup> The Second Estate was distinguished from the First and Third by certain legal privileges: exemption from taxation, the right to bear arms, the

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> According to the statistics offered by Dewald, the noble population of France in 1450 contributed 1 per cent to the total. By 1789 it was 0.52 per cent. See J. Dewald, *The European Nobility 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 1996), Chapter One.

bestowal of honour and the prerogative to hold certain political and military offices. The traditional function of the nobility was to defend the State. However, administrative positions taken up by the 'Robe' nobility had become incorporated into understandings of the function and identity of the Second Estate by the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The nobility was not a unified order; it was an Estate divided by wealth and there were increasing discrepancies in financial standing and influence. This gave cause for concern during the course of the eighteenth century. The *Ancien Regime* was not an entirely rigid social structure which prevented all mobility between orders. Rather, the acquisition of noble status through the purchase of office was increasingly sought by the upper echelons of the Third Estate. As the venality of offices shows, the Second Estate was and continued to be a distinct and highly desirable order.<sup>4</sup>

Partly because the purchase of office questioned the traditional values of the nobility, the Second Estate received growing criticism in the eighteenth century, both from its own members and from outside. It was considered to be an Estate as much in need of redefinition as of reform. Indeed, the number of articles concerning the nobility in Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* is indicative of an order, if not in crisis, at any rate in flux.<sup>5</sup> In an Enlightened culture preoccupied with issues of social utility and the ability of man to improve himself, the nobility came under

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<sup>3</sup> See F. L. Ford, *Robe and Sword: the Regrouping of the French Aristocracy after Louis XIV* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

<sup>4</sup> See W. Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See for example, 'Dégradation de noblesse', 'Etats de la noblesse', 'Noblesse ancienne', 'Noblesse les armes', 'Noblesse de chevalerie', 'Noblesse haute', 'Noblesse héréditaire', 'Noblesse honoraire', 'Noblesse cléricale', 'Noblesse d'épée', 'Noblesse féminine', 'Noblesse militaire', 'Noblesse du sang', 'Noblesse vénale' in Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des*

scrutiny in a variety of arenas. Although the system of orders was rarely questioned, the matter of how the nobility could be most useful to this system was often a focus of deliberation.

A series of debates took place from the middle of the century, concerned with the function, definition and condition of the French nobility. Originating from all three Estates, questions surrounding *la noblesse* focused on the belief in the necessity of improvement and in the desire for increasing its utility within society. As I will explore in this chapter, led by questions of military performance and the dangers of luxury, reviews of the nobility were shaped by new models of health and education. I will suggest that central to these wide-ranging discussions were concerns over the physical condition of the male nobility with regard to their traditional function as defenders of the State. Changes in the nature of warfare, brought about by technological advancement and developments in military organisation, problematised traditional ideals of noble identity which depended upon physical prowess and honour. Arguments concerned with the duality of the role of the noble, in which he was presented alternatively as natural warrior and disciplined soldier, held key implications for ideas about exercise and physical reform.

### **The Nobility and the Defence of Honour**

During the course of the eighteenth century, the Second Estate was subject to debate and disparagement. Criticism of the nobility was by no means new. On a conceptual level the French nobility had, for centuries, been perceived as in decline. From the Middle Ages onwards there had been a literary tradition of criticism from

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*sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772), vol. 11, pp.



within the nobility, concerning its own abatement and the need to restore the original ideals of the chevalier. This 'rhetoric of nostalgia' was given greater force as the wealthier nobility became increasingly urbanised.<sup>6</sup> However, this tendency should not necessarily be linked to any real crisis of the nobility. More recent research has questioned the view of the nobility as 'a decaying class of parasitic, hereditarily privileged landowners', and has shown them, in contrast, to be an incredibly adaptable and resilient group.<sup>7</sup> Thus, criticisms of the nobility in mid eighteenth-century France were not unfamiliar. However, aside from an ongoing self-critique, there were specific debates arising in the 1750s in response to new social practices which were concerned particularly with entry into military office, the education of the nobility and involvement with commercial activity.

The dispute surrounding the function of the nobility, which was played out in the public sphere in the 1750s, took its lead from Montesquieu's model of the French State, as set out in his *L'Esprit des Lois* published, in 1748.<sup>8</sup> Here, he identified three forms of government: Republics, Monarchies and Despotisms. The first, he argued, was sustained through virtue, the second by honour and the last by fear. France, due to its historical make-up and geographical location was, and should remain, a monarchy. However, according to Montesquieu, the tradition of honour

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167-81.

<sup>6</sup> See, S. Anglo (ed.), *Chivalry in the Renaissance* (Boydell, 1990); J. Dewald, *The European Nobility*; Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (Yale, 1984); M. Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the end of the Middle Ages* (London, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> C. Lucas, 'Nobles, Bourgeois and the Origins of the French Revolution', *Past and Present* 60 (1973), p. 84. For a traditional view of the nobility see A. Soboul, 'Classes and Class Struggles during the French Revolution', *Science and Society* 17 (1953), pp. 238-57. For revised accounts see D. Bien, 'The Army in the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction and Revolution', *Past and Present* 85 (1979), pp. 68-98; Dewald, *The European Nobility*; G. Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth-Century: From Feudalism to Enlightenment*, Eng. Trans. (Cambridge, 1985); Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Michigan, 1996).

which sustained both the noble's warrior instinct and the balance of power between the King and his aristocracy, was under threat by new commercial practices and the spread of luxury. Honour, a traditional noble attribute and a 'legacy' handed down from the tradition of chivalry, was regarded by Montesquieu to be a limited and fragile resource. As a consequence, it needed to be protected by restoring nobles to their traditional role as defenders of the State and purging the officer corps of its non-noble element.

Montesquieu's widely circulated exploration of the nature of government problematised the nobility's existing involvement in commerce.<sup>9</sup> The question of nobility and trade was long-standing. Nobles had been invited by Colbert in 1664 to engage in maritime and wholesale trade without loss of status, prompted by the new India companies.<sup>10</sup> However, when the Abbé Coyer published his *La Noblesse Commerçante* in 1756 in response to the Marquis de Lassay's *Montesquieu's* account of a traditional military nobility which had been printed in the *Mercure* four years earlier, it initiated a polemical debate.<sup>11</sup> Pamphlets and contemporary periodicals raged on the subject of whether or not nobles should be allowed to practice in commerce and whether such involvement damaged their honour.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit des lois, ou du rapport que les lois doivent avoir avec la constitution de chaque gouvernement, les mœurs, le climat, la religion, le commerce, etc.* (1748).

<sup>9</sup> In his study of eighteenth-century Feudalism, Mackrell suggests that noble involvement in commerce became problematic when ideas on how to rejuvenate the nobility began to clash with traditional conceptions of the relationship of different classes to one another. See J. Mackrell, *The Attack on Feudalism in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 1973), Chapter 4 'The Nobility and Business', pp. 77-103.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Marquis de Lassay's *Réflexions* were published posthumously in the *Mercure*, December 1754.

<sup>12</sup> For biographical details of Coyer, see above, Chapter Five, Section 'Education and the Enlightened State'. See Gabriel Coyer, *La Noblesse commerçante* (London, 1756); Philippe Auguste de Saint-Fox, Chevalier D'Arcq, *La Noblesse militaire, ou le patriote françois* (Paris, 1756); Gabriel Coyer, *La Noblesse militaire et commerçante; en réponse aux objections faites par l'auteur de la Noblesse Militaire* (Amsterdam, 1756). The majority of pamphleteers supported D'Arcq. See Barthoul, *Lettre à l'auteur de 'la Noblesse commerçante'* (Bordeaux, 1756); E. L. Billardon de Sauvigny, *L'Une ou*



most famous response to Coyer came from the bastard son of one of Louis XIV's bastard sons, the Chevalier D'Arcq. His *La Noblesse Militaire* was published the same year.

The son of a draper, Gabriel Coyer insisted in his *La Noblesse Commerçante* that poor nobles should be encouraged to practice in commerce and should be allowed to do so without loss of status. This would aid both individuals and the State, strengthening the economy so that France would be able to rival England as a commercial power. Whilst acknowledging the importance of maintaining and developing military and naval strength, respectively, Coyer argued that commercial wealth was increasingly necessary to France's standing in Europe. After all, without money to purchase artillery, wars could not be fought and won. Soldiers alone could not win battles.<sup>13</sup>

In his *La Noblesse Militaire*, D'Arcq responded with a fierce defence of the traditional military nobility and an attack on the dangers of unrestricted commerce. Reiterating Montesquieu's model, D'Arcq argued that France should maintain its position as a warrior state: 'Quoi! Dans un Etat belliqueux, une *Noblesse commerçante*!'.<sup>14</sup> As such, he contended that the preservation of a military nobility,

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*l'Autre, ou la noblesse commerçante et militaire, avec des réflexions sur le commerce et les moyens de l'encourager* (Mahon, 1756); Madame Belot, *Observations sur la Noblesse et le Tiers-Etat* (Amsterdam, 1758); La Hausse, *La Noblesse telle qu'elle doit être, ou moyen de l'employer utilement pour elle-même et pour la patrie* (1758); P. A. D'Alès de Corbet, *Nouvelles Observations sur les deux systèmes de la noblesse commerçante ou militaire* (Amsterdam, 1759). Only a few pamphlets were comparable to Coyer's: Séras, *Le Commerce Ennobli* (Brussels, 1756); J. H. Marchand, *La Noblesse commerçable ou ubiquiste* (Amsterdam, 1756); Rochon de Chabannes, *La Noblesse oisive* (1756). However, the majority of periodical reviews were in Coyer's favour.

<sup>13</sup> Later, Coyer argued in his response to D'Arcq that D'Arcq had overlooked the fact that it was necessary to develop a nation as well as to defend it. See, Coyer, *Développement et défense du système de la noblesse commerçante* (Amsterdam, 1757), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Arcq, *La Noblesse Militaire*, p. 6.



a strong standing army and a policy of land expansion were key to the country's power.

The very existence of the debate between Coyer and D'Arcq is demonstrative of the fact that definitions of noble honour were in flux. Honour was traditionally bestowed as a right of birth, the result of reputation or glory or the product of quality of character. However, from the sixteenth century onwards, the importance of virtue and personal merit had been exceeded by either a lineage of blood or a degree of wealth necessary to purchase a title.<sup>15</sup> In eighteenth-century discussions, the issue of what should be honoured was reconsidered. The question was posed: How should the nobility best earn its honour?

According to the author of the article 'Honneur', published in the *Encyclopédie* in 1765, utility held the key to honourable activity: 'L'homme qui peut nous être utile est l'homme que nous honorons; et chez tous les peuples, l'homme sans honneur est celui qui par son caractere est censé ne pouvoir servir la société'.<sup>16</sup> The article highlighted the transient nature of honour and argued that its definition changed with society's needs. Thus, what was useful in society did not remain in stasis. To illustrate this, it was argued that for the natural man, bodily strength was most honoured - 'La force du corps est le principal mérite'.<sup>17</sup> However, in modern times the body was no longer the primary source of honour: 'La supériorité des lumieres obtient la principale estime; la force de l'ame est plus respectée que celle du corps'.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, as we shall see, the eighteenth-century debate on the nobility indicates that the role of the body in defining nobility had not been eclipsed. On the

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<sup>15</sup> See, E. Shalk, *From Valor to Pedigree* (Princeton, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> 'Honneur', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 8, p. 289.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

contrary, in the second half of the century the strong body was reinstated as a key source of honour.

The Coyer versus D’Arcq polemic has tended to be used by historians to examine tensions in the political and class structure of the *Ancien Régime* and to chart the beginnings of the breakdown of a society of orders.<sup>19</sup> However, mid-century discussions of the nobility, when examined on their own terms, also reveal common understandings of noble honour within which the body played a central role. Although Coyer and D’Arcq were fiercely opposed on the subject of commerce, they nevertheless held certain shared beliefs and concerns about the nobility. Neither man questioned the Second Estate as a legitimate part of a monarchy, and Coyer did not advocate bourgeois ennoblement.<sup>20</sup> They saw their aim as maximising the strength and security of the State and maintaining a successful monarchy. However, both men worked from the premise that the State system, as it existed, was not functioning successfully. They were concerned with the problem of poverty within the nobility, and with the great discrepancy between rich and poor nobles, although they agreed that all sections of the Second Estate should enjoy a degree of wealth befitting their status.

Preoccupied with the idea that all members of society should be useful and occupied, the texts of both authors were littered with references to *utilité*, *inutilité*, *oisiveté*. In conjunction with the desire for social utility, they were fearful of the damaging effects of luxury, which they both viewed as a new and increasing

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Mackrell, *The Attack on Feudalism* and Smith, *The Culture of Merit*.

<sup>20</sup> Séras went further than Coyer in his work, *Le Commerce Ennobli* (Brussels, 1756), which argued that instead of turning nobles into merchants, merchants should themselves be ennobled.

problem.<sup>21</sup> However, it is interesting to note that they differed over the causes of degenerative luxury. D’Arcq argued that commerce was the author of luxury, while Coyer maintained that the rich nobility spread luxurious behaviour during peacetime by living a sedentary life of excess. Both men insisted that nobles should earn their honour. D’Arcq contended: ‘L’Etat nourrit ses membres; il faut que tous les membres servent l’Etat. Le citoyen oisif, par conséquent inutile, est criminel envers sa patrie, et lui dérobe tout ce qu’il consomme. Le Gentilhomme est citoyen avant d’être Noble’.<sup>22</sup> Finally, and most importantly here, both texts were concerned with the body of the *male* noble. The authors’ understanding of noble honour relied upon concepts of valour, courage, physical hardship and manliness. Thus, they placed an emphasis upon the concept of the noble as warrior.

However, their appraisals of the body differed. D’Arcq argued that the French noble was a natural warrior. His inherent instinct to fight and defend his country would enable him to go to battle at any time. According to D’Arcq, a warrior nation such as France obtained its physical strength to fight from its nobility’s *préjugé*.<sup>23</sup> The military nobility did not need to be physically trained in order to win wars. As long as they were healthy, their hereditary honour would fire the passion which gave them the strength to fight. (A more tranquil nation, in contrast, needed to train its soldiers to prepare them for war.) However, the French noble’s natural instinct for war was considered by D’Arcq to be a fragile commodity

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<sup>21</sup> For example, D’Arcq acknowledged that there was a problem with idleness and luxury in certain sections of the nobility and called for laws to curb ostentation amongst the troops. See Arcq, *La Noblesse Militaire*, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> D’Arcq argued that if poor nobles had not found work by the age of thirty, they should be stripped of their noble status. Arcq, *La Noblesse militaire*, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> The term *préjugé* was in flux in the eighteenth century. The modern meaning of the term was in use. However, d’Arcq’s discussions of noble *prejugé* still referred to the idea of noble distinction or superiority.



easily corrupted by external influences. Involvement in dishonourable activities such as commerce could jeopardise a nobleman's honour and harm his natural tendency to fight. Therefore, the military nobility should not be involved in any activity other than the defence of the nation.

Coyer, in stark contrast, maintained that it was precisely the noble's lack of activity during peacetime which weakened his body and made him unable to act as an effective fighting machine: 'La Noblesse Française, en tems de paix, est un corps paralytique sans mouvements et sans action; dirai-je? sans idées: ce tems de paix peut être long'.<sup>24</sup> He contrasted this state with the Spartans, who continually exercised in order to be fit for war: 'ces courses de chevaux et de chariots, ces jeux, ces combats gymniques, ces exercices de toute espèce qui les tenoient toujours en haleine'.<sup>25</sup>

For this reason, Coyer suggested that involvement in naval commerce could act as suitable training for a naval officer who would otherwise learn nothing whilst waiting for war. Although he acknowledged that naval commerce was neither as glorious nor dangerous as battle, Coyer contended that nobles should enter its service as a means of keeping them active during peacetime, whilst providing them with vital wartime naval skills. In addition, it was a means of rendering poorer nobles financially self-sufficient and was suitably fatiguing and difficult. In short, it required valour and would maintain noble honour:

La Marine Guerrière sommeille dans les bras d'une longue paix, la guerre s'allume, on cherche des hommes faits, et on ne trouve que des homme à faire. Ce n'est pas dans un Port qu'on apprend à connoître les

mers, à éviter les écueils, à braver les tempêtes, à mesurer les forces de l'ennemi, à l'attaquer avec avantage, à s'armer contre le vent, l'eau et le feu de cette triple cuirasse dont le premier Navigateur se couvrit. Les Athlètes ne se formoient que dans l'arène, et voilà le sort de la Marine marchande; paix ou guerre elle est toujours en action; on pourroit donc en tirer pour la marine Royale des Officiers qui auroient tout vû, tout connu, tout sondé, tout affronté, qui auroient formé leur corps aux fatigues et leur ame aux dangers.<sup>26</sup>

This argument was countered by D'Arcq, who claimed that the marine merchant paid others to do the hard work and spent his days in the safety of the trading post: 'mais le vrai Commerçant consommé reste dans un comptoir, où il calcule continuellement'.<sup>27</sup>

Coyer's account of the noble's body becoming weak during peacetime raised important questions regarding the need for physical training. It problematised the concept of the natural warrior so fiercely defended by D'Arcq. Coyer's criticisms of the physical state of the nobility were followed by the crushing defeats of the Seven Years War which 'led the French army into decades of self-analysis'.<sup>28</sup> Defeats at Rossbach (1757) and Minden (1759) at the hands of Frederick II's efficient and disciplined Prussian army were regarded as humiliating for France. There was no clearer indication than this that the army needed to be reformed, and it was the officer corps which bore the brunt of the blame for its shortcomings. Significantly,

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<sup>24</sup> Coyer, *La Noblesse commerçante*, p. 42

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 96-97.

<sup>27</sup> Arcq, *La Noblesse militaire*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *The Culture of Merit*, p. 227.

however, the nobility continued to be considered as the means of restoring military greatness. This was to be achieved, it was argued, through a reformed noble education which placed instruction of the body at its heart. The body remained central to definitions of nobility. However, in the second half of the century, it was a physically trained and healthy noble body which emerged as a model of utility and honour.

### **Noble Education and the Changing Role of the Body**

Motley, in his analysis of seventeenth-century aristocratic education, highlights a central problem in reaching an understanding of noble instruction: 'Why should a social group whose very essence was based on hereditary status need or seek instruction and training?'.<sup>29</sup> He argues that in the seventeenth century, the belief in natural superiority and the place of education's contribution in nurturing that superiority, went hand in hand. Education also helped to train the nobility for the changing demands of the order, such as increased involvement with State administration. Chaussinand Nogaret's thesis, which claims that in the eighteenth century the nobility incorporated the bourgeois value of merit as a reaction against criticisms of their order, has also been challenged by David Bien and Jay Smith. Both historians have persuasively argued that the nobility had its own longstanding culture of merit, highlighting that education was not traditionally at odds with the rights of birth.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> M. Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility 1580-1715* (Princeton, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Bien, 'The Army in the French Enlightenment', Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility* and Smith, *The Culture of Merit*.



However, eighteenth-century models of noble education differed in significant ways from earlier forms of aristocratic instruction. Firstly, seventeenth-century commentators such as François de La Nouë had claimed that education could only be successful when combined with natural capacities: ‘Natural advantages, without teaching and experience, lack direction; teaching without natural capacities is defective; and experience without the other two lacks perfection’.<sup>31</sup> As we have seen, eighteenth-century education, in contrast, was accredited with the power to totally transform individuals.<sup>32</sup> A weak and delicate infant could be converted into a powerful and robust adult through education alone. Thus, the place of birth in theoretical discussions of education was called into question. Secondly, the education of the nobility in the eighteenth century became more focused upon the body and the necessity of physical strength. We have noted that the body of the male noble in the eighteenth century was closely associated with warrior prowess. However, this prowess needed to be inculcated through training.

The physical life of the nobility has been examined mainly in terms of the ‘civilizing process’, which charts the gradual codification of the gestures and movement originally associated with the medieval warrior knight.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the *longue durée*, the ‘demilitarisation of the traditional chivalric skills’ transformed noble status from that of feudal knight, through Renaissance courtier, to *honnête homme*.<sup>34</sup> Hence, by the seventeenth century, the physical life of the European court,

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<sup>31</sup> François de La Nouë, *Discours Politiques et Militaires*, in M. Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> See above, Chapter Five.

<sup>33</sup> See N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, Eng. Trans. (Oxford, 1994); R. Chartier (ed.), *A History of Private Life: III Passions of the Renaissance*, Eng. Trans. (Harvard, 1989); G. Vigarello, ‘The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility’ in M. Feher (ed.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (London, 1989), pp. 149-99.

<sup>34</sup> S. Anglo, *Chivalry*, p. xii.

encapsulated in the teaching of posture, 'had as its goal the control of movement, rather than any benefit from it'.<sup>35</sup> The physical control demanded of the courtier was viewed as 'scarcely related to war'.<sup>36</sup>

These versions of events assume that the essence of what it meant to be noble in the early modern period had become completely removed from military activity. They fail to acknowledge that although the chevalier was replaced by the officer and not all nobles were engaged in warfare (the rise of the robe nobility from the sixteenth century onwards had provided an alternative means of gaining honour), the defence of the nation remained essentially in the hands of the Second Estate.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the significant growth in size of the French army during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to provide the young noble with entry into the officer corps as a natural career option.<sup>38</sup>

As we have seen, the physical education of the nobility had, in the seventeenth century, been utilised to adopt a more 'civilized' or controlled behaviour, which focused upon the constraint of movement.<sup>39</sup> However, discussions on the physical education of the nobility changed in tone in the eighteenth century. They were more centred upon strength, as it was argued that the nobility had lost its physical superiority. The seventeenth-century culture of the control of movement, encapsulated within the court life at Versailles, was replaced by calls to use movement to add strength to the body.

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<sup>35</sup> Vigarello, 'The Upward Training of the Body', p. 181.

<sup>36</sup> Anglo, *Chivalry*, p. xi.

<sup>37</sup> C. Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalisation of the French Army under the *Ancien Régime*' in M. Duffy (ed.), *The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800* (Exeter, 1980), pp. 29-48.

<sup>38</sup> See P. Fouquet-Lapar, *Histoire de l'Armée Française* (Paris, 1986), Chapter Two and Jones, 'The Military Revolution'.

<sup>39</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section 'From Preservation to Exposure'.

## **The *Ecole Militaire***

Concerns about the performance of the army, and its officers, had been voiced from around the middle of the century.<sup>40</sup> The Peace of Aix-La Chapelle, which marked the end of the War of Austrian Succession in 1748, had incorporated concessions which had not been popular with the French public. The *Ecole Royale Militaire* was founded in 1751, ostensibly to allow the poorer nobility, excluded of late from the officer ranks by the high cost of venal posts, to enter the army. However, the establishment of the school also offered opportunities to reconsider the officer's education.

Before the establishment of the *Ecole Militaire*, noble education had consisted of a broadly military upbringing at the family estate alongside the learning of weaponry. This took place either at home or, for the wealthier from the sixteenth century onwards, at an *Académie*. Subsequently, the young noble would serve in the army as a cadet to an older relative. Nevertheless, the idea of a military school was not new. La Nouë, in his *Discours Politiques et Militaires* (1587), proposed a plan for four military academies in France to be located at the royal houses of Fontainebleau, Moulins, Cognac and Plessis-lès-Tours. The first purely military school had been established by Richelieu, at his own expense, but it did not remain open for long. Calls for an *Ecole Militaire* in France were renewed when similar schools appeared elsewhere in Europe. From 1720, Frederick II brought the Prussian cadet companies together in schools in Stolpe, Potsdam, Kulm and Berlin. In Russia, a corps of aristocrat-cadets was established in 1730.<sup>41</sup> The efficacy of the training of

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<sup>40</sup> Bien, 'The Army in the French Enlightenment'.

<sup>41</sup> See A. Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, Eng. Trans. (Indiana, 1979), pp. 105-8.



the French military nobility was called into question as early as 1747, by the military writer and Lieutenant of the French Gardes, Chevalier de Brucourt (1712-1755), in his *Essai sur l'Éducation de la Noblesse*:

Notre siècle est à plaindre de ce que la mollesse et la volupté ont aboli peu à peu les nobles et utiles occupations, qui faisoient une espece d'apprentissage militaire. Tous les exercices du corps sont bornés à une année d'Académie: le reste de la vie se passe pendant la paix dans une oisiveté qui ammollit le coeur et énerve le corps.<sup>42</sup>

Following an attempt earlier in the century to set up a school, the *Ecole Militaire* was founded by Louis XV to provide a military education for five hundred country gentlemen. The school was intended for '(les) enfans de la noblesse françoise dont les peres ont consacré leurs jours et sacrifié leurs biens et leur vie à son service'.<sup>43</sup> The venture was put forward by the *financier* Pâris-Duverney and supported at court by Madame de Pompadour, mistress and advisor to the king and widely believed to be related to the Pâris family.<sup>44</sup> It had been Antoine Pâris, the eldest of the four famous financiers, (the 'grand Pâris') who, in 1724, had first conceived the idea for the school. The four brothers had made their fortune in providing provisions for the army. Duverney's nephew, Pâris de Meyzieu (1718-1778), later became the director of studies for the school. The building was designed by the architect Gabriel (a favourite of Pompadour's) and the construction of the school was funded in part by a state lottery.

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<sup>42</sup> Charles-François-Olivier Rosette, Chevalier de Brucourt, *Essai sur l'éducation de la noblesse. Première Partie* (Paris, 1747), p. 64.

<sup>43</sup> Pâris de Meyzieu, 'Ecole Militaire' *Encyclopédie* (1755), vol. 5., p. 307.

<sup>44</sup> It was believed that Madame de Pompadour was the daughter of either Le Normant de Tournehem or Pâris de Montmartel.

Dumarsais, in his *Encyclopédie* article 'Éducation', held up the *Ecole Militaire* as an admirable example of instruction:

Nous avons dans l'école militaire un modele d'éducation, auquel toutes les personnes qui sont chargées d'élever des jeunes gens, devroient tâcher de se rapprocher; soit à l'égard de ce qui concerne la santé, les alimens, la propreté, la décence, etc. soit par rapport à ce qui regarde la culture de l'esprit.<sup>45</sup>

Pâris De Meyzieu published his views on the *Ecole Militaire* soon after its foundation, both in his *Lettre d'un ancien Lieutenant-Colonel François* and in the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>46</sup> Here, he outlined the utility of a military education to the State and the specific aims of his curriculum. De Meyzieu argued that the military nobility was in need of reform, as it had been in decline in recent times. Whereas the nobility had once been a purely military force, the expansion of the church, the decline of the wealth of the nobility and the debilitating influence of money and luxury had diminished the 'Goût de la Nation françoise pour la guerre'.<sup>47</sup> This could only be restored through education, the importance of which De Meyzieu believed had been overlooked by modern laws. Ancient models of military education should therefore be adapted to suit modern warfare and morals.

According to De Meyzieu, education had two aims: training of the mind and of the body. He was concerned that the latter should not merit less attention than the former: 'Mais ce n'est pas tout que d'avoir cultivé le coeur et l'esprit, il faut aussi former le corps, et le rendre propres au métier des armes. Cette partie nécessaire de

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<sup>45</sup> 'Éducation', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 403.

<sup>46</sup> See J. B. Paris de Meyzieu, *Lettre d'un ancien Lieutenant-Colonel François, à Mr...sur l'école Royale Militaire* (Middelbourg, 1753) and 'Ecole Militaire', *Encyclopédie*.

l'éducation est entièrement abandonnée parmi nous'.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it was the neglect of the body which De Meyzieu cited as the main cause of the decline of the military nobility.

Therefore, it was necessary to reinstate the centrality of strength and fitness to the training of the army. De Meyzieu did acknowledge that the neglect of physical exercise was due, in part, to advances in warfare. With the advent of firearms, single combat (on horseback or on foot) no longer decided battles. However, according to De Meyzieu, a strong body continued to be crucial to the business of war:

On convient, il est vrai, que la force du corps est moins nécessaire, depuis qu'elle ne décide plus de l'avantage des combattans; mais outre qu'un exercice continuel l'entretient dans une santé vigoureuse, desirable pour tous les états, il est constant que les militaires ont à essuyer des fatigues qu'ils ne peuvent surmonter qu'autant qu'ils sont robustes. On sôûtient difficilement aujourd'hui le poids d'une cuirasse, qui n'auroit fait qu'une très-legere partie d'une armure ancienne.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the curriculum at the *Ecole Militaire* placed great emphasis upon exercise and De Meyzieu advocated both dance and fencing.<sup>50</sup> Dance was recommended as good training for military exercises:

La Danse a particulièrement l'avantage de poser le corps dans l'état d'équilibre le plus propre à la souplesse et à la légereté. L'expérience nous a démontré que ceux qui s'y sont appliqués, exécutent avec

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<sup>47</sup> Paris de Meyzieu, *Lettre*, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>49</sup> Paris de Meyzieu, 'Ecole Militaire', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, pp. 308-9.



beaucoup plus de facilité et de promptitude tous les mouvemens de l'exercice militaire.<sup>51</sup>

Although De Meyzieu acknowledged the problems with fencing in conjunction with the duel, he argued that it should not be neglected, partly because the skill, regrettably, was sometimes necessary for a gentleman, but more importantly because it increased vigour and agility: 'Il ne faut regarder comme inutile rien de ce qui peut entretenir le corps dans un exercice violent, qui pris avec la modération convenable, peut être considéré comme le pere de la santé'.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the fact that it did not form part of the curriculum at the *Ecole Royale Militaire* in Paris, De Meyzieu outlined the importance of swimming to a military education:

Il est surprenant que les occasions et les dangers n'aient pas fait de l'art de nager une partie essentielle de l'éducation. Il est au moins hors de doute que c'est une chose souvent utile, et quelquefois nécessaire aux militaires. On en sent trop les conséquences, pour négliger un avantage qu'il est si facile de se Procurer.<sup>53</sup>

As we shall see, swimming was to gain importance in the second half of the century as a physical activity, both within the army and amongst the leisured elite.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Similarly, De Brucourt's work on noble education, published in the previous decade, highly recommended dance, horse-riding and fencing. See De Brucourt, *Essai sur l'éducation de la noblesse. Première Partie* (Paris, 1747), Chapter Two 'Exercices du corps', pp. 57-69.

<sup>51</sup> Paris de Meyzieu, 'Ecole Militaire', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 312. For a discussion of the historical importance of the dance to military drill, see William H McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Paris de Meyzieu, 'Ecole Militaire', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 312. For a discussion of the duel in France, see, F. Billacois, *The Duel: its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, Eng. Trans. (London, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> De Meyzieu, 'Ecole Militaire' *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5, p. 312.

<sup>54</sup> See below, Chapter Seven.

Through an educational programme which incorporated a high level of physical exertion, De Meyzieu aimed to halt what he regarded as the physical degeneration of the noble youth in France:

Je suis bien persuadé que dans l'Ecole Militaire on n'aura pas pour les jeunes Gens les mêmes complaisances ridicule que les Peres et les Meres n'ont que trop communément pour leurs enfans, que nous voyons ensuite plongé dans une molesse efféminée si peu digne d'un homme de guerre. Ils ne peuvent supporter la plus légère fatigue, le plus petit mal sans que leur santé délicate n'en soit altérée. J'ai vu les plus braves Gens du monde être peu propres au service par cette raison là.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, he argued that without physical training, the bravest of soldiers could not sustain the fatigues of war. Broucourt had expressed a similar sentiment six years earlier when he asserted: 'Le savoir et la bravoure ne suffisent pas, si la délicatesse du corps ne permet pas de supporter la fatigue'.<sup>56</sup>

Accordingly, the discipline at the *Ecole Militaire* was rigorous. In all seasons, the students arose at half past five, when they washed and dressed in their distinctive blue uniform. At six o'clock they had prayer and mass. The lessons, interspersed with exercise breaks, were held between the hours of seven and nine, ten and twelve, two and four, and five and seven. They went to bed at nine o'clock.<sup>57</sup> An almanach advertising the lottery of the *Ecole Militaire* confirmed the image of the disciplined soldier which the school claimed it would produce: 'Accoutumés à une

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<sup>55</sup> Paris de Meyzieu, *Lettre*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>56</sup> De Brucourt, *Essai sur l'éducation de la noblesse*, p. 220.

<sup>57</sup> R. Laulan, *L'Ecole Militaire: aperçu historique et guide du visiteur* (Paris, 1929), 'Aperçu Historique'.

vie frugale, ils y seront des ennemis nécessaires du luxe et de la dissipation; formés de bonne heure à la discipline militaire'.<sup>58</sup>

In his *Lettre d'un ancien Lieutenant-Colonel François*, De Meyzieu answered common objections received from the public concerning the foundation of the *Ecole Militaire*. One such grievance was that the warrior instinct was natural to the nobility, and therefore there was no need to provide training for them. De Meyzieu countered this attack by confirming the crucial importance of education in the production of good officers, and we have seen that he placed instruction at the centre of his plan to produce a reformed military nobility. The combination of discipline and physical strength procured at the school would, according to De Meyzieu, make the French army a force to be reckoned with.

### **The Degeneration of the Noble's Body**

Underpinning much of the literature surrounding the *Ecole Militaire* was the notion that the nobility had physically declined as a result of increased luxury. This view became more pronounced from the early 1760s after the defeats of the Seven Years War and the publication of works such as Rousseau's *Émile*, which popularised a critique of modern urban living. Models of improvement were taken from the Greeks and Romans, the ancient Franks and Gauls and, finally, from the contemporary peasant.

Appeals to French history were made as a means of negotiating the division of power between the monarch and its subjects. 'Partisan versions of the past'

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<sup>58</sup> *Almanach utile et agréable de la loterie de l'École Royal Militaire, pour l'année 1760. Où voit sont origine, ses progrès, son établissement en France, et la façon de placer le plus avantageusement sa*



respectively promoted the Frankish inheritance of ancient noble rights and the Gaulish origins of an absolute monarchy.<sup>59</sup> However, as Robin Briggs suggests, ‘There was no real difference between the values attributed to the Germanic invaders and those of Republican Rome’.<sup>60</sup> Both versions recalled a lost era of a ruling elite, distinguished through its physical prowess.

Blame for physical degeneration was accorded to the increased urbanisation of the nobility. In his *Plan d’Education Publique*, published in 1770, Coyer voiced his general concerns about civilized man:

L’homme civilisé à l’excès ne connaît plus ses forces. Il ne sait pas combien il en perd par la mollesse, et combien il pourrait en acquérir par l’habitude d’un fort exercice. Il était bon de le civiliser; mais il ne fallait pas l’énerver. Combien de villes, de grandes villes surtout, n’offrent plus que des hommes dégénérés, de petites ames dans les corps faibles!<sup>61</sup>

The physician Baumès, author of an essay on physical education submitted to the *Société Royale de Médecine* in 1784, unfavourably compared the modern noble with his predecessor, blaming the weakness of the former, in part, on the abuse of physical education in modern times:

...une generation faible, amollie, moins vivace a remplace, sans lui succeder, cette race brillante (les Franks), ces hommes de chasse et de

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mise. *Enrichi de quatre-vingt-dix figures en taille-douce, qui pourront servir de devises* (Paris, 1760), p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> R. Briggs, ‘From the German Forests to Civil Society: The Frankish Myth and the Ancient Constitution in France’, in P. Burke, B. Harrison and P. Slack (eds.), *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), p. 234. See also K. M. Baker, ‘Memory and Practice: Politics and the Representation of the Past in Eighteenth-century France’ in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 31-58.

<sup>60</sup> Briggs, ‘From the German Forests to Civil Society’, p. 249.

<sup>61</sup> Gabriel Coyer, *Plan d’éducation publique* (Paris, 1770), p. 50.

combat, dont les corps etaient robustes, sains, et la stature de plusieurs pouces au dessus de celle des gens civilisés de nos jours; et tous ces malheurs sans doute ont été produits par la mollesse et les abus de l'éducation physique.<sup>62</sup>

The anonymous author of the educational treatise, *De l'Education Publique*, published in 1762, went further in comparing the noble to the peasant and the urban worker:

Pourquoi autrefois la Noblesse étoit-elle plus robuste, qu'aujourd'hui? Elle vivoit à la campagne, dormoit la nuit, chassoit le jour au soleil et à la pluie, se baignoit souvent, et mangeoit beaucoup... Pourquoi les paysans sont-ils moins fluxionnaires, moins cacochymes, que les habitans des Villes? Ils vont mal vêtus, souvent nuds pieds, s'enferment peu, travaillent fort, et digèrent bien; leur malheur n'est que d'être trop pauvre. Pourquoi dans les Villes mêmes les enfans des petits sont-ils plus forts, plus adroits, plus alertes, que ceux des grands? Ils se donnent plus de mouvement, ils s'exercent.<sup>63</sup>

Former French heroes were identified as models to encourage the modern military officer. In 1762, a three-volume history of French warfare, dealing with the period from 1492 to 1761, was published by order of Government.<sup>64</sup> The author, the famous Abbé Guillaume Francois Raynal, began by stating that Greek and Latin writers carefully chronicled the lives of their great captains so that they could animate the defenders of the country. The aim of his book was to open the eyes of

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<sup>62</sup> Baumès, SRM 120 d. 2 number 1, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> *De l'éducation publique* (Amsterdam, 1762), pp. xiv-xv.

young fighters to the virtues and talents of their ancestors. In 1774, a work on the military spirit of the Gauls was published with the same goal in mind; to learn from one's ancestors.<sup>65</sup>

Exercise was considered to be the key to the superior strength of both the noble's ancestors and contemporary social inferiors. The physician Amoureux fils, in his work on physical education which was also submitted to the *Société Royale Médecine* in 1784, looked back to a time in France when, 'L'exercice n'étoit pas simplement un jeu, c'étoit une occupation'.<sup>66</sup> Exercise was also connected to manliness in these discussions. Coyer, in his call for education to be more 'mâle', claimed: 'Il pourrait en dire autant à ces hommes sans mouvement, qui ont oublié qu'ils sont hommes'.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the perceived physical degeneration of the nobility was also linked to effeminacy and a disregard for traditional male pursuits.

The current pastimes of the nobility, still maintained as useful in the 1750s, received increasing critical attention as the physical activities of both the Ancients and the peasantry were held up as ideals. Swimming, running and gymnastics became fashionable replacements for dancing, fencing and hunting in literature on military reform.<sup>68</sup> As we have seen, Jaucourt argued in his advocacy of gymnastics in the *Encyclopédie* that modern society had devalued exercise as an activity, and

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<sup>64</sup> Guillaume Francois Raynal, *Ecole Militaire ouvrage composé par ordre du gouvernement* (Paris, 1762).

<sup>65</sup> De Sigrais, *Considérations sur l'esprit militaire des gaulois, pour servir d'éclaircissements préliminaires aux même recherches sur les françois, et d'introduction à l'histoire de France* (Paris, 1774).

<sup>66</sup> Amoureux Fils, 'Quels sont en France les abus à refomer dans l'education physique', pp. 87-8, SRM 120 d. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique*, p. 15. For his argument that education should be more manly, see p. 46.

<sup>68</sup> On the development of military gymnastics, see Marcel Spivak's doctoral thesis, 'Les origines militaires de l'éducation physique française, 1774-1848', from the University Paul Valéry, Montpellier (1975).



only retained physical pursuits which did more harm than good to the body.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the author of *De l'Éducation Publique* claimed that useful exercises had been neglected by the modern nobility:

Les Arts d'exercice, les seuls que notre Education admette, sont la danse, les armes et le Manège. La Course et la nage, dont les anciens faisoient tant de cas, sont abandonnées au vil peuple; la Paume paroît trop fatigante, et la chasse est devenue mesquine, depuis que les Nobles ont dédaigné leurs Châteaux pour s'enterrer dans les Villes<sup>70</sup>

Debates on the degeneration of the urban nobility were fuelled by anxieties over military performance. They were also undoubtedly influenced by the new hygiene. The body of the noble, like that of the mother and the child, came under increasing scrutiny in the drive to produce strong, healthy and useful citizens.

### **Jean Colombier and the Healthy Noble**

The work of the military physician Jean Colombier (1736-1789), *Préceptes sur la Santé de la Guerre, ou Hygiene Militaire*, published in 1775, highlights the integration of debates on military reform with broader discussions of health.<sup>71</sup> Colombier studied surgery under the direction of his father, and subsequently at the military hospitals at Metz and Landau. In 1758, he became *Chirurgien-major* of the *Commissaire général de la cavalerie*, before becoming a doctor of the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris, in 1767. He then also took up the position of Royal Inspector of Hospitals and Prisons. Colombier has been identified by Marcel Spivak, in his work

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<sup>69</sup> See above, Chapter Three, Section 'The Cult of Antiquity'.

<sup>70</sup> *De l'Éducation publique*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>71</sup> Jean Colombier, *Préceptes sur la santé des gens de guerre, ou hygiène militaire* (Paris, 1775).

on military gymnastics, as a key figure in the development of physical training within the French army.<sup>72</sup>

Colombier began the text by emphasising the need for well-trained troops. With undoubted reference to Prussia's comparatively small army, he contended that it was not the quantity of soldiers that won wars, but the quality: 'La gloire et la sûreté d'un Royaume dépendent moins du nombre, que de la bonté des Troupes qui y sont entretenues'.<sup>73</sup>

According to Colombier, the maintenance of health within the military corps was central to military success: 'Quelles sont les ressources qu'on peut trouver dans un corps foible et mal-sain? Et quels succès des Troupes qui ne jouissent pas des avantages d'une bonne santé?'.<sup>74</sup> A healthy body provided the necessary foundation for the key attributes of a good soldier: 'La force et la vigueur, l'adresse et la valeur, sont les qualités d'un bon Soldat. Elles ne peuvent être réunies que dans un corps sain'.<sup>75</sup> Taking his lead from the new hygiene, Colombier used the Galenic non-naturals to structure his proposed régime for the development and maintenance of health within the army.<sup>76</sup> As in this body of health writing, Colombier particularly targeted his health advice at elite members of the military profession. Thus, it was the wealthy urban nobility whom Colombier regarded as most in need of physical reform.

Exercise lay at the heart of Colombier's proposals: 'Tous les peuples belliqueux ont regardé l'exercice comme le moyen le plus propre pour former de

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<sup>72</sup> M. Spivak, 'Les Origines Militaires'.

<sup>73</sup> Colombier, *Préceptes sur la santé*, p.viii.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. x-xi.

<sup>76</sup> For an explanation of the non-naturals, see above, Chapter Three, Section 'Introduction'.

bonnes Troupes'.<sup>77</sup> He argued, in a similar vein to Coyer, that it was the discrepancy between the noble's style of life during peace and war which caused a problem of fitness among the officer corps. He contended that it was impossible to reconcile the sedentary, luxurious life of the city or the Court with the physical hardships engendered by war. Moreover, in 1763, La Chalotais had maintained that young nobles regarded entry into the military profession as a soft option, 'ne cherchent le plus souvent que l'oisiveté et le libertinage'.<sup>78</sup> It was, after all, the daily exercise of the Greek and Roman troops which had given them their success. Colombier insisted that there should be ordinances passed in France to prescribe exercise during peacetime: 'Il est évident que ceux qui seront accoutumés aux exercices, et qui jouiront d'une bonne santé, seront moins exposés que les autres à succomber aux fatigues de leur état'.<sup>79</sup>

However, according to Colombier, the physical training of the noble officer had to commence before he entered his military service. Unlike the soldier, or the officer recruited from the poorer provincial nobility, the urban noble started his military career at a disadvantage; namely, his childhood education was inadequate. The wealthy noble was not brought up to withstand hardship. In contrast, his luxurious style of life weakened his temperament. Furthermore, drawing on current health advice, Colombier argued that the wealthy noble was born with a weak temperament due to the poor health of his parents. Consequently, in order to break the cycle of degeneration amongst the elite, it was even more crucial for the noble's

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<sup>77</sup> Colombier, *Préceptes sur la santé*, p. 169.

<sup>78</sup> Louis-René Caradeuc de la Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale, ou plan d'études pour la jeunesse* (1763), p. 143.

<sup>79</sup> Colombier, *Préceptes sur la santé*, p. 22.



early education to focus upon the development of health and strength. Thus, the development of the strong officer began with his mother's milk:

Que les meres saines nourrissent elles-mêmes leurs enfans; que celles qui ne le peuvent pas par raison de santé ou d'état, choisissent des nourrices fraîches et robustes; qu'elles les envoient à la campagne avec leurs nourrissons, pour y vivre de la même maniere qu'elles avoient coutume de le faire; on aura déjà beaucoup gagné.<sup>80</sup>

In his version of physical education, Colombier's emphasis was upon the 'natural'. He recommended country living, loose clothing, cold baths and simple food. Following Rousseau, he urged parents to accustom their sons to fatigue and hardship. He acknowledged the parental urge to protect their offspring, but argued that ultimately, protection on the battlefield was ensured by a strong and tough body: 'mais les moyens par lesquels on prétend y parvenir, sont précisément ceux qui produisent ou aggravent les maux qu'on vouloit éviter'.<sup>81</sup> Coyer, in his *Plan D'Education Publique*, published in 1770, had made more explicit the connection between a weak constitution and inadequacy on the battlefield. To mothers who failed to pay attention to their son's physical education, he warned: 'C'est vous-même qui l'aurez tué'.<sup>82</sup>

According to Colombier, luxurious and idle behaviour had to be eliminated from the young noble's experience: 'Enfin tous les objets de luxe et surtout l'usage des voitures doivent leur être interdits, comme des causes qui augmentent la mollesse

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 8-9.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique* (Paris, 1770), p. 44.

et la nonchalance'.<sup>83</sup> In order for the noble officer to have a successful and honourable military career, he had to become accustomed to physical hardship from an early age, and to continue regular exercise throughout his adulthood:

Si l'on néglige les moyens propres à former leur jeunesse aux travaux militaires, ils trouvent dans le métier des Armes une source inépuisable d'infirmités, souvent même une mort prématurée par l'effet des maladies; ils ont du moins le déplaisir sensible de ne pouvoit pas remplir une carrière glorieuse et utile. Si ceux qui sont déjà formés n'observent pas une conduite propre à maintenir le corps dans l'habitude des Exercices, et dans un état de force et de vigueur nécessaire à un Militaire, ils trouvent dans l'alternative du mouvement et du repos, de la mollesse et de la fatigue, les occasions fréquentes de finir aussi tristement leurs jours, qu'ils auroient pu les prolonger honorablement.<sup>84</sup>

In his treatment of military training, Colombier compared the wealthy noble unfavourably with both his poorer counterpart and with the common soldier. He argued that inferior officers, coming from a variety of backgrounds, usually had an advantage over the nobility who lived at court or in Paris. This was because country living made them healthier: 'Ainsi la pauvre Noblesse qui habite la campagne, élevée plus durement que celles des villes, est généralement la plus propre au Service'.<sup>85</sup> However, subordinate soldiers were invariably healthier, as the work they carried out rendered them more able to support the fatigues of war. Indeed, according to Colombier, cavalrymen were often recruited from villages, precisely because of their

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<sup>83</sup> Colombier, *Préceptes sur la santé*, p. 17.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

experience of hard labour and their ability to ride well: 'ils sortent presque tous du labeur, et sont accoutumés aux fatigues, aux injures du temps, et à conduire les chevaux, ce qui les rend sains et robustes'.<sup>86</sup>

The fact that the peasantry was seen to be better equipped than the modern officer to carry out the traditional function of the chevalier raised fundamental questions concerning the authority of the noble's body. The body of the noble officer became directly comparable with that of his troops, an analysis that would have been impossible at the start of the century. According to the Comte de Tressan, the author of the article *Homme de Guerre* published in the *Encyclopédie* in 1765, the inferior status of the officer's body, threatened his superiority over his troops on the battlefield. Moreover, if an officer had not received adequate physical training, 'Il s'expose à donner un mauvais exemple'.<sup>87</sup> De Tressan maintained that the recent changes in military education, exemplified in the *Ecole Militaire*, were remedying this problem. However, as it stood the officer was not able to carry out his role effectively:

La raison éclairée démontre à l'homme de guerre que lorsqu'il ne se tient pas en état de bien combattre de sa personne, il s'expose à devenir inutile à lui-même et à sa patrie en beaucoup d'ocassions, et à donner l'exemple de la mollesse à ceux qui sont sous ses ordres.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the noble had to be sufficiently exercised in order to command authority. Otherwise, he exposed himself to dishonour, disrespect and indiscipline amongst his troops. Officers had to earn the respect of their men and this was to be achieved

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> Le Comte de Tressan, 'Guerre, (homme de)', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 7, p. 995.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



through gaining the necessary physical strength and agility to render themselves effective soldiers.

### **Conclusion: The Chain of Physical Reform**

The polemic on the function of the Second Estate, which took place in the 1750s, was traditional in its outcome – namely that the male nobility should be employed in the defence of the nation. However, this did not signify a victory for D’Arcq and his view of the noble as a natural warrior. It was Coyer’s stance, that officers should be trained more effectively in order to withstand the fatigues of war, that was to prove influential in subsequent discussions of noble education.

David Bien has argued that the price which the Second Estate had to pay for Ségur’s law of 1781 – which demanded proof of four generations of nobility as a rule of entry into the *Ecole Militaire* – was increased discipline. According to Bien, noble honour was earned through obedience, rather than bravery and bodily vigour. I have argued, in contrast, that physical strength was in fact resurrected in importance in the eighteenth century, and the body remained central to noble identity. Physical prowess was reinstated as a source of honour, but on terms that actually served to undermine the traditional ideal of the *chevalier*. Corporeal strength was no longer seen to be a natural attribute of the male noble; he now had to be trained.

Discussions surrounding the Second Estate were informed by new models of health and education. Here, the body of the noble was presented as degenerate and sick. As was the case for women and children, the reform of the military nobility was viewed as part of a chain of physical improvement which could regenerate the French State. As we have seen through the example of Colombier, the development

of the officer's health began with the mother-to-be. Thus, the noble came under the same scrutiny as that of other members of society who had also been targeted for reform. Once the body of the noble body became comparable with that of others, its special status was threatened.

In the following chapter, using the example of swimming in Paris as a case study, I will explore the commercial development of exercise in France. As we have seen, the traditional pursuits of the leisured elite were the subject of criticism in the new hygiene literature. In the second half of the eighteenth century, swimming emerged as a virtuous activity which, it was argued, could restore health and vigour within the confines of an urban environment.

## Chapter Seven

### *The Business of Exercise: The Vogue for Swimming in 1780s Paris*

#### Introduction

Et quel est le Philosophe, l'homme d'Etat, l'Administrateur, qui ne soit point maintenant persuadé de la nécessité d'en faire une des bases essentielle de l'Education publique et privée, et qui ne reproche à nos instituteurs modernes d'avoir négligé l'exercice d'une faculté générale connue des Anciens, et si souvent nécessaire, tout-à-la-fois à la conservation de la vie et de la santé, au salut d'une armée, au succès d'une négociation importante, à la sûreté et à la propagation du commerce?<sup>1</sup>

When Bartholémy Turquin promoted the second season of his swimming school - a temporary structure moored on the river Seine - he left the Parisian public in no doubt as to the significance of this new service. He framed his advertisement in terms of the restoration of a virtuous and ancient exercise, painting himself as a worthy citizen, offering an essential service. Public utility was his key selling feature.

In 1780s Paris, swimming was an important topic of debate. I will argue that the opening of Turquin's swimming school (the first of its kind) in 1785 marked the culmination of a renewed concern with swimming in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was not until this resurgence of interest that swimming began to be regarded as an appropriate and useful physical activity for certain sections of



urban society. Influenced by wider social debates, swimming took on a particular significance. Increasingly popular forms of physical exercise such as swimming played a role in the construction of conceptions of civic virtue and social utility which were emergent in this period. Turquin's bid in 1784 to set up his school was not the first of its kind. There were several attempts to establish a swimming institution in Paris in the 1770s and 1780s. Therefore, Turquin's venture needs to be placed within the context of a generally recognised need for swimming instruction.

The aim of this chapter is to examine how and why swimming could come to be considered a virtuous physical activity in late *Ancien Régime* Paris. What were the conditions that facilitated discussions of the exercise? What form did these discussions take? How was the market for swimming developed in the capital? What were the practicalities of establishing a swimming school? Who swam in 1780s Paris? Finally, how did what Rousseau championed as a 'free' activity come to be packaged and sold?

In identifying a specific debate on swimming which was played out in the second half of the eighteenth century, I am not contesting that swimming was never written about (or indeed practised) prior to this. Swimming was, after all, an ancient form of exercise. It is no coincidence that a renewed interest in swimming took place alongside a general Classical revival. In new discussions of swimming, a Roman proverb was often quoted, which argued that a man without education knew neither how to read nor to swim.<sup>2</sup> Information that circulated on how to swim had

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<sup>1</sup> Bartholémy Turquin, *Avis au public sur l'établissement d'une école de natation* (Paris, 1786).

<sup>2</sup> 'Pour caractériser un personnage grossier, un homme sans éducation, un ancien proverbe disoit qu'il ne savoit ni lire ni nager', Melchisedech Thévenot, *L'Art de Nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement...nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et considérablement augmentée par M.P.D.L.C.A.A.P.* (J.C. Poncelin de La Roche Tilhac) (Paris, 1781), p. 10.

remained essentially unchanged from the end of the sixteenth century. However, new work concerned with swimming, published from the 1760s - informed by debates on degeneration, ideals of nature and antiquity, a revitalised theory of hygiene, and new research into human physiology informed by comparative anatomy - carried with it very different social messages.

As we have seen, a new dynamic model of the body, which placed an increased emphasis upon the importance of exercise, emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> This highlighted the ineffectual nature of the physical pursuits of the urban elite. Out of this criticism of traditional noble modes of exercise such as fencing, hunting and dancing, emerged swimming as an exercise that could add strength and vigour to the body and contribute to society in a useful way. Swimming was characterised as a neglected activity. A modern disregard for swimming, it was argued, could not fail to be associated with the corruption of urban life. Swimming was perceived as socially useful for a variety of reasons. Foremost, it promoted health; as an exercise, it required effort and vigour. It was regarded as an activity which could combine the beneficial effects of immersion in cold water with bodily movement, to produce a robust health without recourse to internal remedies.

Within discussions of hygiene, bathing was a particular focus of interest in the press, and enterprises which used water both for washing and as a remedy were frequently the subject of advertisement and debate.<sup>4</sup> Following the establishment of the first floating baths on the Seine in 1761, there developed a fast growing and

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<sup>3</sup> See above, Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup> The term bathing should not be confused with swimming. Throughout the chapter, bathing will be used to refer either to washing, or to the immersion in water for therapeutic purposes.

competitive hydrotherapy industry in Paris. From this related commercial enterprise came the practical implementation of swimming instruction. Turquin's swimming school was modelled on existing bathhouse structures on the river.

Thus, swimming needs to be viewed within the context of a burgeoning interest in the therapeutic effects of water. Swimming intersected with medical concerns. Long viewed as an activity which could broadly encourage good health, this period witnessed the medicalisation of discussions of swimming. Calls for swimming instruction emanated from the medical press. It was to bodies such as the *Académie Royale des Sciences* and the *Société Royale de Médecine* that proposals for swimming-related initiatives were taken for perusal.

Moreover, swimming had a double-edged utility: not only did it render people strong and healthy, it also saved lives. Drowning was a veritable obsession in 1770s and 1780s Paris. In the move to clean up the urban hazard which was the Seine, a successful solution to the problem of drowning was of paramount importance.<sup>5</sup> Interest in swimming developed in this climate of urban improvement and was encouraged by new public health initiatives. In addition, fear of drowning promoted the ability to swim as a universal need. After all, everyone would be exposed to water during their lives, it was argued, whether it be the open sea or an urban river.

At the end of the seventeenth century, comparative anatomists had overturned the previously held view that swimming was a natural capacity, albeit one that had been lost through fear. The idea that there was a *need* to be taught how to swim gained force during the second half of the eighteenth century. In general discussions



of education there were calls for swimming to become an essential part of the instruction of children. The belief in the need for swimming education opened up commercial opportunities for the swimming expert and entrepreneur.

## The Swimming Literature

A hundred years before the opening of Turquin's school, a book had been published on swimming by the travel writer and keeper of the king's library, Melchisedech Thévenot (1620-1692). Published and illustrated by Charles Moëtte, *L'Art de Nager* was written primarily for its amusement value; its various editions and English translations were testament to its popularity.<sup>6</sup> The author wrote: 'Je souhaite que ce que j'en ay écrit en mon particulier puisse se trouver du goût des Curieux, et c'est le seul but qu'un honnête homme doit se proposer dans ses ouvrages, qui ne meritent le suffrage du public qu'autant qu'ils sont capables d'instruire, et de plaire'.<sup>7</sup>

However, Thévenot's work was not original. He gleaned the bulk of his text from Everard Digby's *De Art Natandi*, first published in London in 1587.<sup>8</sup> Even the illustrations were copied; Moëtte simply re-worked them in the more fashionable

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<sup>5</sup> A. Williams, *The Police of Paris 1718-1789* (Louisiana, 1979), p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Melchisedech Thevenot, *L'Art de Nager, démontré par figures, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement* (Paris, 1696). The work was translated into English and published in London in 1699. A version of Thevenot's work was published as late as 1838, under the title *The Swimmer's and Skater's Guide*.

<sup>7</sup> Thevenot, *L'Art de Nager* (1696), 'Preface'.

<sup>8</sup> Everard Digby, *De arte natandi libr duo, quorum prior regulas ipsius artis, posterior vero prax in demonstrationemque continet* (London, 1587). The first work entirely devoted to swimming was by Wynman, professor of language at the University of Ingolstadt in Bavaria in 1538. Written in Latin, it attracted some interest in the Netherlands, but was not translated into French or English. Everard Digby's swimming publication was the first to have a significant impact in Europe. For a discussion of early swimming see, N. Orme, *Early British Swimming 55BC-AD1719* (Exeter, 1983).

Classical style.<sup>9</sup> Only Thévenot's preface was original. Although he indicated the importance of the ability to swim for soldiers and sailors, Thévenot made no mention of swimming as being beneficial to one's health, and he did not recommend it as a useful part of an education. In fact, although he carefully described all manner of swimming techniques, Thévenot argued, as did Digby, that man could in fact swim naturally. He maintained that although people berated nature for not providing man with the ability to swim, when animals had been accorded this capability, what actually prevented man from swimming was fear, or more specifically, 'les mouvemens de frayeur, d'impatience, de promptitude' in the water.<sup>10</sup>

Sixty years later, in a volume published in 1765, the *Encyclopédie* included two articles on swimming, 'Nager' and 'Natation', which offered a critique of earlier swimming literature. The article 'Nager' referred to Thévenot's work and his argument for the natural ability of man to swim and claimed that, 'Nous avons plusieurs expériences qui détruisent ce sentiment'.<sup>11</sup> Thévenot's claim was refuted using new research into comparative anatomy, which investigated the position of humans and animals in the water. A description of swimming was given: 'l'art ou l'action de nager consiste à soutenir le corps vers la surface de l'eau, et à s'avancer ou faire du chemin dans l'eau par le mouvement des bras et des jambes'.<sup>12</sup> Two theories were put forward as to why the movements demanded by swimming were not innate in humans. Firstly, using Borelli's research into the differing centres of

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<sup>9</sup> See Illustrations, Numbers Three and Four.

<sup>10</sup> Thévenot, *L'Art de Nager* (1696), p. ii.

<sup>11</sup> 'Nager' in, Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Geneva, 1751-1772), vol. 11, p. 5. As early as 1650, Thomas Browne had exposed the belief that man could swim naturally as a 'common error'. Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or Enquiries into very many received tenants, and commonly presumed truths* (London, 1650), Book 4, Chapter vi 'of swimming', pp. 165-67.

<sup>12</sup> 'Nager', *Encyclopédie* (1765), vol. 11, p. 5.

gravity in humans and animals, it was argued that as man's brain was heavier than that of other animals, he could not naturally lift his head (or more crucially his nose) above the water. This skill could only be acquired through practice.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, employing the account of Bazin, a correspondent of the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, it was contended that whilst animals adopted the same position in water as they did on land (in this way, the action of swimming and walking were practically identical), man had to learn an alternative position, since he would drown if he maintained his natural stance in the water.

In 1781, Thévenot's work on swimming was republished, having been largely re-written by the Paris-based writer Poncelin de la Roche Tilhac.<sup>14</sup> All that was left untouched was Thévenot's (or rather Digby's) guide to different swimming strokes. A review of the new edition, published in the *Journal de Médecine* in October 1781, commented that this section, 'est la seule qui appartienne à Thevenot de tout l'ouvrage'.<sup>15</sup> In this edition, the entire emphasis of the discussion on swimming had been transformed. Poncelin remarked: 'Toutes les Nations de la terre, considérant la profession de Nageur, moins comme une faculté naturelle à l'homme, que comme un art véritable, ont eu soin d'y former leurs enfans dès le bas-âge'.<sup>16</sup> The importance of swimming to the army was still maintained, but here the utility of swimming to

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<sup>13</sup> Giovanni Alfonso Borelli, *De vi percussione, et motionibus naturalibus a gravitate pendentibus, sive introductiones et illustrationes physico-mathematicae apprimè necessariae ad opus ejus intelligendum de motu animalium* (Layduni Batavorum, 1686). A French edition under the title, 'Dissertation sur le marcher de l'homme et des animaux' was published in 1689.

<sup>14</sup> Malchisedich Thévenot, *L'Art de Nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement... nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et considérablement augmentée par M.P.D.L.C.A.A.P.* (J.C. Poncelin de La Roche Tilhac) (Paris, 1781). Poncelin published on a wide-range of subjects including the military state of America, the campaigns of Louis XV, and general histories of France.

<sup>15</sup> See, *Journal de Médecine*, October 1781, pp.376-77.

<sup>16</sup> Thevenot, *L'Art de Nager* (1781), p. 8.



the general public was identified, not simply because it prevented people from drowning, but also because it strengthened the body and aided health.

Poncelin contended that the Romans had recognised the importance of swimming. Furthermore, the chevaliers of medieval France also appreciated the art, which was practised until the reign of Louis XI. However, according to Poncelin, when the seigneurs left the countryside and moved to the city, they forged new tastes and the ability to swim was lost. Therefore, modern Europeans had devalued swimming as society became weak and degenerate: ‘Les bons nageurs sont aujourd’hui relégués dans les climats, où notre luxe et notre délicatesse n’ont pas encore pénétré’.<sup>17</sup> The re-emerging importance of learning to swim in Paris was therefore inextricably linked with the idea that the city was corrupt.

The revitalisation of swimming was seen by Poncelin as a means to aid the regeneration of society. Swimming was, above all, characterised here as a *useful* civic activity: one that rendered people healthy, saved lives, and helped in the robust defence of the nation. At the end of his introduction, Poncelin stated that his aim in writing the book was to be useful to mankind in contrast to, ‘la frivole, et souvent stérile ambition d’Auteur original.’<sup>18</sup> By the publication of Poncelin’s edition of *L’Art de Nager*, it was generally considered that swimming should become an essential part of a general education; one that could save lives and improve health.

### **The Resurgence of Interest in Swimming**

In a report submitted in 1777 by the *Académie des Sciences* on a proposed swimming school, the authors commented: ‘Il est extraordinaire, au-delà de tout ce

qu'on peut dire, qu'on ait négligé si long temps cette partie si nécessaire de l'éducation de la jeunesse de tous les états'.<sup>19</sup> Swimming had been a matter of concern in discussions of military improvement from the 1740s. As we have seen, the efficacy of the existing physical training of the officer was called into question.<sup>20</sup> However, debates on the necessity of movement did not simply centre upon the body of the individual soldier, but also on entire regiments. As a consequence of the innovations in warfare headed by Prussia, a greater importance was placed upon the strategic movement of armies in military campaigns. The need to mobilise troops quickly across land and water produced calls for swimming instruction to form part of military training. Jean Frederic Bachstrom, in his work on military swimming published in 1741 contended: 'l'art ou l'habitude de nager est extrêmement utile et nécessaire à un Soldat, à moins qu'il ne veuille exposer souvent sa vie, ou même laisser échapper les meilleures occasions d'attaquer et de surprendre l'Ennemi'.<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen, the director of studies at the *Ecole Royale Militaire* in Paris, Pâris de Meyzieu, called for swimming to form part of a military education.<sup>22</sup> In the 1770s, a swimming pool of more than one hundred metres in length was established at the *Ecole Royale Militaire* at Sorèze in the Pyrenees. This purpose-built pool was constructed as a direct response to discussions surrounding the shortcomings of the existing education of the officer. Competitive swimming was encouraged here, and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., P. 115.

<sup>19</sup> See the report on Arnaud's proposals for baths and a swimming school by the *Académie des Sciences*, republished in Abbé Arnaud's *Etablissement qui interesse l'utilité publique et la décoration de la capital* (Paris, 1790), p. 19. Arnaud's unsuccessful proposals for baths and a swimming school will be discussed below, Section 'Swimming for the Public Good'.

<sup>20</sup> See above, Chapter Six.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Frederic Bachstrom, *L'Art de Nager: ou invention à l'aide de laquelle on peut toujours se sauver de naufrage; et en cas de besoin, faire passer les plus larges rivières à des armées entières* (Amsterdam, 1741), p. 2.

formed part of the public demonstrations in which students annually participated. Pupils had to swim as far as they could in one hour.<sup>23</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, calls for swimming instruction were extended to the general population. Arguably, the comments of one writer acted as a catalyst for the broadened interest in swimming. In his *Émile*, Rousseau contrasted swimming with the existing physical activities of the leisured elite. He contended that the rich gave their children an exclusive education simply to distinguish themselves from the less well off: 'Ainsi les jeunes gens élevés avec soin apprennent tous à monter à cheval, parce qu'il en coûte beaucoup pour cela; mais presque aucun d'eux n'apprend à nager, parce qu'il n'en coûte rien'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the rich did not learn to swim precisely because it was free. They preferred to spend a fortune on riding schools, even though in Rousseau's opinion riding did not have the utility of swimming. After all, the ability to ride a horse could not save a life, in the way that being able to swim could. He wanted Émile to be as agile in water as he was on land: 'Émile sera dans l'eau comme sur la terre. Que ne peut-il vivre dans tous les éléments! Si l'on pouvait apprendre à voler dans les airs, j'en ferais un aigle; j'en ferais une salamandre, si l'on pouvait s'endurcir au feu'.<sup>25</sup>

Rousseau contested that parents were fearful of teaching their children to swim because of the danger of drowning. However, he maintained that it was no worse for a child to drown whilst being taught to swim than it was to drown without

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<sup>22</sup> See above, Chapter Six, Section 'The Ecole Militaire'.

<sup>23</sup> J. Fabre de Massaguel, *L'Ecole de Sorèze de 1758 au 19 Fructidor an IV, cahiers de l'association Marc Bloch de Toulouse études d'histoire méridionale n. 2* (Paris, 1958). Massaguel uses as his source, *Exercices publics des élèves de l'Ecole Royale Militaire de Sorèze, tenue par les Religieux Bénédictins de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur* (Carcassonne, 1776-1790).

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; ou de l'éducation*, François et Pierre Richards (eds.) (Paris, 1964), p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



ever having learned. Moreover, Rousseau did not believe that danger was necessarily a prerequisite of learning to swim: 'Comme l'exercice ne dépend pas du risque, dans un canal du parc de son père il apprendrait à traverser l'Hellespont; mais il faut s'appriivoiser au risque même, pour apprendre à ne s'en pas troubler; c'est une partie essentielle de l'apprentissage dont je parlais tout l'heure'.<sup>26</sup> In swimming, as in other activities, *Émile* was to be subjected to the risks he would face as an adult.<sup>27</sup>

In his discussion of swimming, Rousseau focused upon the need to harden *Émile*'s body to the physical challenges presented by nature. His comments provoked a swift response from medical writers. Even though, as we have seen, Barbeau Dubourg, the editor of the *Gazette de Médecine*, was critical of Rousseau, in July 1762 an article appeared in the *Gazette* supporting Rousseau's discussion of the neglect of swimming in education: 'nous sommes entièrement de son avis'.<sup>28</sup> The article promoted swimming as 'une ressource bien précieuse', the pursuit of which would result in 'un avantage manifeste pour la santé'.<sup>29</sup> However, the article contended that 'Jean-Jacques' had gone too far in advocating a measure of risk in learning to swim. The *Gazette* stated that the youth of Paris should be able to learn to swim in the city in complete safety. It would suffice for the police to permit a designated location on the Seine for the practice of swimming (the article recommended the area around the Quai de la Tournelle). Here, during fine weather, there could be a number of swimming instructors made available to give lessons for a very modest price. Additionally, at the Pont de la Tournelle there could be placed

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See above, Chapter Two, Section 'Émile's body'.

<sup>28</sup> *Gazette de Médecine*, Wednesday 7 July 1762, pp. 9-11. For Barbeau Dubourg's criticism of Rousseau, see above, Chapter Two, Section 'Conclusion: The Audience for *Avis au Peuple* and *Émile*'.

swimmers and boaters to go to the aid of those in need. With this facility, it was suggested, swimming would soon be regarded as ‘une partie essentielle de l’éducation’.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the Abbé Coyer, in his *Plan d’Éducation Publique* published in 1770, advocated the use of the Seine in encouraging the urban elite to swim. Echoing Rousseau, he argued: ‘Faisons un meilleur usage de la Seine. Peut-être que s’il en coûtait autant pour apprendre à nager qu’il en coûte pour apprendre à danser, ou si le peuple ne nageait pas, on nagerait’.<sup>31</sup>

Calls for swimming instruction were not exclusive to Paris. Under the direction of Gardane in the 1770s, the *Gazette de Santé* actively encouraged the receipt of medical reports from provincial cities.<sup>32</sup> In February 1776, a letter from Meaux was published regarding the inherent danger of rivers in urban areas. ‘Un ami de l’humanité’ had apparently put forward a sum of 24 livres in an effort to procure the services of two townsmen, proficient in the arts of swimming and diving. Each day during the coming summer, the successful candidates would teach four students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Their payment was to be presented once the lessons had been completed to the satisfaction of the town's magistrate. The author of the letter hoped that the example of Meaux would be followed by citizens of other towns.<sup>33</sup>

A supplement to the volume entitled ‘Arts Académique’, published in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* in 1786, contained advice additional to essays on horse-riding, fencing and dancing: ‘Ce volume réunit les trois arts enseignés dans nos

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Coyer, *Plan d’éducation publique* (Paris, 1770), p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘Gazette de Santé (1773-1789)’, in J. Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Journaux 1600-1789* (Paris, 1991) vol. 1, pp. 495-99.

académies; sçavoir, l'art de l'Equitation, celui de l'Escrime, et celui de la Danse. On y a joint l'Art de Nager, trop peu répandu parmi nous, et qui seroit si utile en un grand nombre de circonstances'.<sup>34</sup> This demonstrated the calls for swimming to be restored as an essential part of education.

### **The Bathing Industry**

Pinel's commentaries on hygiene in the 1780s, which can be taken as an index of the health concerns of the public sphere, included a discussion of swimming.<sup>35</sup> Pinel asked why swimming, the benefits of which were so apparent, was not encouraged by medical practice. He blamed both doctor and patient for choosing milder forms of exercise, such as riding in carriages, when the prescription of swimming could easily cure the illnesses caused by urban weakness and langour. According to Pinel, it was the combination of exercise and immersion in water which rendered swimming such an effective cure:

On sent en effet combien un exercice modéré, combiné avec l'action d'un liquide sur toute l'habitude du corps, doit l'emporter en efficacité sur une foule de pratiques minutieuses et des moyens sans énergie, mis souvent en vogue par la complaisance du Médecin et la puissillanimité du malade<sup>36</sup>

Twenty years earlier, the articles on swimming contained in the *Encyclopédie* had also argued that it was the combination of cold water and movement which made

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<sup>33</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 22 February 1776, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Encyclopédie Méthodique, arts académiques: equitation, escrime, danse, et art de nager* (Paris, 1786).

<sup>35</sup> See above, Chapters One and Chapter Three.

<sup>36</sup> *Gazette de Santé* (1788), n. 23, p. 89.



swimming so beneficial to health. The article 'Nager' referred the reader to the entries 'bains' and 'gymnastique', thus confirming the dual purpose of the exercise. The author of 'Natation' went further, arguing that, 'D'où s'ensuit que l'action de nager dans un fleuve ou dans tout autre amas d'eau froide, bien pure, peut joindre le bon effet de l'exercice à celui du bain froid'.<sup>37</sup>

The beneficial effects to health of swimming were framed with reference to both movement and water. Reformed discussions of swimming drew on more established literature on bathing to illustrate its utility within a conservative régime.<sup>38</sup> Swimming was also directly connected to the extremely competitive hydrotherapy industry which developed in Paris in the second half of the century. Poitevin had set up the first floating baths at the Pont Royal in 1761.<sup>39</sup> His venture earned a place in the *Encyclopédie*, in which his plans were printed in the first volume of plates published in 1762. Hereafter, bathing gained huge popularity in Paris. As the *Gazette de Santé* commented in July 1776, 'Depuis que les hommes ont plus de soin de veiller à la propreté de leur corps, les bains se sont infiniment multipliés dans cette Capitale'.<sup>40</sup>

The subject of bathing formed a central part of discussions on medical and health matters within the specialist press. Pinel said of the existing bathhouses in 1785: 'On doit espérer que des établissemens publics de ce genre se multiplieront et se perfectionneront dans la suite, et qu'on rendra plus général un des plus puissans

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<sup>37</sup> 'Natation', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 11, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Poncelin's discussion of the utility of swimming for health in his edited version of Thevenot's *L'Art de Nager*.

<sup>39</sup> D. Laty, *Que sais-je?: Histoire des Bains* (Paris, 1996), p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 4 July, 1776, p. 29.

moyens qui possède la médecine'.<sup>41</sup> Bathing establishments were frequently the subject of advertisement and debate, from simple information about their location, to in-depth discussions of new water filter innovations or plumbing techniques used in the baths. An increasing variety of medical bathing techniques became available, from vapour baths, to descending, ascending and horizontal showers, to herbal baths.<sup>42</sup>

*Baigneurs* vied for the right to administer different types of baths in the capital. As competition grew, securing the approval of bodies such as the newly formed *Société Royale de Médecine* became increasingly important. A committee of experts would consider proposals for baths, or existing sites, in terms of their innovation and public utility. The approval of experts could help to secure a period of exclusive privilege from the King for the bathing entrepreneurs.

However, the implementation of any particular hydrotherapy venture in Paris depended upon a wide range of factors. Approbation alone, although a powerful factor, particularly in procuring funds, did not ensure success. One of the difficulties in establishing a bathhouse was in gaining permission to set up an establishment along the Seine. In order to install any construction on the river, one had to seek permission from the *Prévôt des Marchands* who was the head of the *Bureau de Ville*, the office which had jurisdiction over the Seine. However, control of bridges was split horizontally between the *Prévôt* and the *Lieutenant de Police* based at Châtelet (who had full responsibility for the quays), which meant that in all probability a

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<sup>41</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, 1785, no. 13, pp. 49-51.

<sup>42</sup> The development of the bathing industry is evident in the correspondence of the *Société Royale de Médecine*, where a range of different types of baths were discussed. See for example 'Bains d'Albert au quai d'Orsay' SRM 201 d. 10 n. 1-10, 'Bains médicaux de Faure de Beaufort' SRM 201 d. 10 n. 15-21, 'Bains de vapeurs par Galland-Dumeril' SRM 201 d. 10 n. 22-28.

prospective *baigneur* would have to solicit both offices for approval of his establishment. In addition, many construction proposals for Paris were brought before the *Assemblée de Police*. Only four men had a right to sit on this committee: the *Prévôt des Marchands*, the *Lieutenant de Police* and the President and *Procureur Général* from the Paris *Parlement*. Thus, the *Parlement* was a third body which could intervene in the construction of a bathing establishment. However, it might also be necessary to take one's plans to a higher power; that of the Secretary of State for the King's household who also held the title of Minister of Paris. Based at Versailles, his approval or disapproval could affect the decisions of the offices of power in Paris.<sup>43</sup> Finally, the approval of the King could, if obtained, influence the establishment of a bathhouse.

Proposals to create swimming schools underwent the same interrogation as petitions for bathing institutions. However, it was not simply Parisian officials who needed to be convinced of the worth of a new venture, such as a swimming school. Jones and Brockliss have argued that public taste played a vital role in securing the commercial success of any medical remedy in the late *Ancien Régime*.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, to a large extent it was the public's curiosity and interest which made swimming important and newsworthy in 1780s Paris. Swimming as an activity was fashionable. Together with Mesmerism and ballooning, it became a public event.<sup>45</sup> The public went to see Turquin's school, as indeed they went to see demonstrations of swimming products. Thus Turquin, through careful advertising, became a well-

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<sup>43</sup> A. Williams, *The Police of Paris 1718-1789* (Louisiana, 1979). For a discussion of jurisdiction over the Seine, see pp. 259-61.

<sup>44</sup> L. Brockliss and C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997), Chapter Eight.



known Parisian entrepreneur who without public demand could not have profited from offering a service that essentially cost so little to provide.

### **Swimming for the Public Good**

Initiatives to create approved enclosed spaces for water-based activities were encouraged by the decree in 1783 which forbade unsupervised swimming and bathing in the Seine.<sup>46</sup> The designation of controlled areas for bathing and swimming formed part of what Antoine Picon has termed the ‘rationalisation of urban space’ in Enlightenment France.<sup>47</sup> Designs for swimming schools were framed on the basis of their intended contribution to public health and safety. The unsuccessful proposals for swimming and bathhouse establishments put forward by the Abbé Arnaud (1777) and the Chevalier Fouré (1782) both took a philanthropic stance. They also highlighted the architectural worth of their designs.

In 1777, the Abbé Arnaud, canon of la Saint-Chapelle at Dunois, sought permission to build two bathing houses and a swimming school in Paris, to be located at the *Pont Royal* and the *Pont Neuf*. The bathhouses, which would provide hot and cold baths at a modest price, were to be placed on the side of the two bridges, well above the water level, so as not to interfere with traffic on the Seine. A swimming school, of 100 feet by 14 feet intended for the use of ‘le peuple’, was to be positioned underneath the bathing house at the *Pont Neuf*.

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of similar public demonstrations in Paris, see S. Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp. 126-27.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen, *An Intimate History of the Swimming Pool: The Springboard in the Pond* (Massachusetts, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> See A. Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*, Eng. Trans. (Cambridge, 1988), p. 186.

je réunis l'école de natation à mon établissement du pont neuf. La position de mes bains autour de l'éperon, facilite merveilleusement tous les arrangemens nécessaires pour former, au bas de cette partie, un bassin disposé de manière à pouvoir en toute sureté apprendre à nager aux jeunes gens.<sup>48</sup>

Arnaud's self-proclaimed objective in developing his venture was, 'procurer du soulagement à l'humanité, et un embellissement à la capitale'.<sup>49</sup> He had commissioned the Paris-born architect, engraver, and one-time editor of the *Encyclopédie* plates, Pierre Patte (1723-1814) to design his establishments.<sup>50</sup> Patte was innovative in his architectural concern for the town as a whole, as opposed to the individual building.<sup>51</sup> He envisaged a total reconstruction of Paris. Concentrating on matters of hygiene, Patte was particularly interested in the management of water in the city. He wrote in his *Mémoires*: 'towns will strike you as being on every side the home of uncleanness, infection and discomfort'.<sup>52</sup> Patte's involvement in Arnaud's project demonstrates a wider concern with urban improvement within which discussions of bathing and swimming facilities formed a significant part.

In 1782, a plan for a national swimming school was submitted by the Chevalier Fouré to the *Société Royale de Médecine*.<sup>53</sup> Fouré, a student of the Florentine architect and set-designer, Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni, was architect to

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<sup>48</sup> Arnaud, *Etablissement*, p. 12. It is not entirely clear by which bridge Arnaud intended the *ecole de natation* to be situated. In his written plan for the school he names the *Pont Neuf*, but in the engraved plans the *Pont Royal* is named.

<sup>49</sup> Arnaud, *Etablissement*, p. ii.

<sup>50</sup> See Illustrations, Numbers Five and Six.

<sup>51</sup> See Picon, *French Architects*, p. 187. Patte published two important architectural works, *Monuments érigés en France à la gloire de Louis XV* (1756) and *Mémoire sur les objets les plus importants de l'architecture* (1769).

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Patte's *Mémoire*, pp. 5-6, in Picon, *French Architects*, p. 187.

<sup>53</sup> SRM 210 d. 10 n. 75 'Plan d'un Ecole nationale pour enseigner l'art de nager'.

the Prince de Conti.<sup>54</sup> The *Société*, in its review of the proposal, set aside particular praise for the noble simplicity of the design.<sup>55</sup> Fouré was more specific than Turquin would later be concerning his intended use for the school. He stated that it would open its doors three times per week; one day for officers or cadets, one day for the soldier, and one day for the general public. As Fouré regarded the ability to swim to be most essential for the army, his school, to be established for the service of the King, would be primarily intended for the instruction of young military men. Unlike Turquin, Fouré also planned to train the ordinary soldier. Swimming, in Fouré's opinion, was not merely crucial to the mobilisation of the army; it also provided beneficial exercise for the troops during their long voyages to the colonies. However, he argued that swimming was useful not only for the army, but for people from all Estates. Therefore, instruction would be extended to the general public:

Cet art, si négligé parmi nous, devoit faire une partie essentielle de notre education: on devoit le considerer comme une exercice indispensable: tout le monde devoit savoir nager, parce que chacun peut se trouver dans le cas d'être noyé. Il n'est personne, ou presque personne qui dans le course de la vie ne se soit vû on n'en vu d'autres prés de périr dans les eaux<sup>56</sup>

In asking for the approval of the *Société Royale de Médecine*, Fouré took care to emphasise that the school would be set up entirely at his own cost, with no financial involvement from the State. The lessons, together with suitable swimming

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<sup>54</sup> Sérvandoni is best known for the square in front of the Saint-Suplice in Paris. See Allan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 24-25 and pp. 135-36.

<sup>55</sup> The archives of the *Société Royale de Médecine* did not include Fouré's actual plan, only his letter of proposal.

<sup>56</sup> SRM 210 d. 10 n. 75 'Plan d'un Ecole nationale pour enseigner l'art de nager'.



attire, would be provided free of charge. In addition to the swimming school, Fouré planned to offer ‘un bain d’hospice’ for the treatment of the army and the public. These water treatments would also be offered at no expense to the patient.

Le Roux, a *physicien* of the University of Paris, also designed a swimming school, a plan of which was included in a supplement to Poncelin’s edition of Thevenot’s *L’Art de Nager*, published in 1781.<sup>57</sup> The layout of the school was particularly grand. The design consisted of an oblong outdoor pool surrounded by banks for spectators. At the head of the pool was the school building which would house the director of the school, together with swimming equipment and changing facilities. Encircling the grounds of the school would flow a canal in which the students would be able to swim freely after they had completed their instruction. Le Roux claimed to have won the approval of the Magistrate of Paris. However, his design was extremely extravagant. The cost of the site alone would have been astronomical, not to mention the question of water supply. Le Roux gave no evidence regarding how he would set about financing such a venture, or as to who might attend the school. Furthermore, he did not seek the approval of the *Société Royale de Médecine* or the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, which suggests that Le Roux’s swimming school design was intended more as a visionary proclamation than a practical proposal.

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<sup>57</sup> Le Roux, *Supplément à la IV<sup>ème</sup> édition de l’art de nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement par Thévenot: contenant le plan d’une école publique de natation, la description de divers nouveaux scaphandres, et de différents pantalons impénétrables à l’eau, tant pour passer une rivière, sans mouiller ses habits, que pour sauver même dans l’hiver ceux qui seroient en danger de se nager* (Paris, 1782). See Illustration Number Seven.

## Controlling Nature

The installation of a swimming school in the Capital was regarded as a question of public utility, not least because the ability to swim was considered a skill which could save lives. However, swimming was a contested solution to the problem of drowning; its usefulness was a matter of debate. The capacity to swim was considered alongside innovative resuscitation techniques, controlled breathing and new designs for buoyant swimming suits, in the search for the most efficacious means to prevent drowning. Revival methods such as Pia's infamous tobacco remedy were given serious attention by Parisian authorities, and were regularly reviewed in the press. Pia developed a method of resuscitation, whereby the poor soul who had been retrieved from the Seine had a pipe inserted into his anus, into which tobacco smoke was blown. This technique had a high success rate.<sup>58</sup>

Nicolas Roger, a 'professional diver', published his *Essai sur l'Art de Nager* in 1783.<sup>59</sup> (It was this work which was included as a supplement in a volume of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* concerned with physical pursuits.) In this publication, Roger argued that it was the art of diving under the water which was crucial to the prevention of drowning, because this skill alone taught people how to hold their breath. Swimming, in contrast, merely taught people how to support their bodies above the water's surface. Indeed, Roger warned his reader against Thévenot's *L'Art de Nager* which, he contested, should be renamed 'l'art de se noyer'.<sup>60</sup>

Roger contended that diving, which was essential to saving one's own life and that of others, had been traditionally undervalued by the Parisian administration.

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<sup>58</sup> For a description of Pia's technique, which was used with reported success in Paris, see, 'De Paris le 12 Juillet' *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 15 July, 1773, p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> Nicolas Roger, *Essai sur l'art de nager* (London, 1783).

He argued that until recently the *Hôtel de Ville* of Paris had offered two rewards, one for retrieving a dead body from the Seine, and one for recovering a living person. According to Roger, this system was soon abused, and two divers would work together, one pretending to drown and one feigning his rescue, in order to split the reward. Of course, the payment was withdrawn, leaving only that for retrieving a corpse from the river. Thus, there was a clear financial benefit in ensuring that a man was dead before fishing him out of the Seine. Roger recalled how he had saved an unfortunate man from the hands of a diver, who had tied the man by his feet to the bottom of the river, in order to claim his reward from the *Hôtel de Ville*.

Roger's tale was detailed in a review of his work by the *Journal Encyclopédique*.<sup>61</sup> The reviewers were at pains to make clear to their readers that it was not under the current administration that this misguided award had been introduced, and that care had since been taken to remove the incentive of leaving a person to drown. Indeed, On 7 September 1765 the *Lieutenant de Police*, Sartine, had abolished the reward for taking a dead body found in the Seine to the mortuary. Instead, he introduced a reward for people who prevented someone from drowning, but this was only to be given if their story was corroborated by a river guard.<sup>62</sup>

Neither swimming, nor diving, were considered to be of much use in the event of a shipwreck. These circumstances, it was argued, necessitated the development of man-made means of staying afloat. Bachstrom, who, advocated the teaching of swimming to military troops, contended that in the event of a storm at sea, the ability to swim would not protect a person from danger: 'Ceux qui nagent en

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<sup>60</sup> See the review of Roger's book in the *Journal Encyclopédique*, March 1787, pp. 234-239.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> See Williams, *The Police of Paris*, p. 260.



perfection ne sont pas non plus exempts de ce danger'.<sup>63</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century, a succession of inventions to keep man afloat were brought before the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, and later the *Société Royale de Médecine*. Such innovations, whilst not new to the eighteenth century, were far more numerous, and arguably became commercially viable for the first time.

### The Swimming Products

In 1775, the jobbing mathematician and *Encyclopédiste*, Abbé de la Chapelle, published a book entitled *Traité de la Construction Théorique et Pratique de Scaphandre, ou du Bateau de l'Homme*.<sup>64</sup> The book offered advice to the reader on how to make a suit, or *scaphandre* which aided buoyancy and enabled non-swimmers to swim. In a footnote, La Chapelle explained that he had constructed the term *scaphandre*, from two Greek words: *scaphé*, meaning 'boat', and *andros*, 'of man'. His creation was approved by the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, who declared it to be the best invention of its kind. The suit consisted of a basic cork jacket which kept a person afloat, and was accompanied by waterproof trousers and hat.<sup>65</sup> Although La Chapelle's book provided complete instruction in how to construct the *scaphandre*, it was also possible to have it tailor-made. In an article concerning La Chapelle's invention in the *Gazette de Santé*, a master tailor by the

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<sup>63</sup> Bachstrom, *L'Art de Nager*, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Abbé de La Chapelle, *Traité de la construction théorique et pratique du scaphandre, ou du bateau de l'homme* (Paris, 1775).

<sup>65</sup> See Illustrations, Numbers Eight and Nine.

name of Hirault was recommended, who could be found at the *Quai des Augustines*. The cost of the suit was 75 livres.<sup>66</sup>

La Chapelle's reasoning for designing such a suit was to render water safer. As humans did not swim naturally, they needed another way to survive in the water. La Chapelle placed little confidence in learning to swim as a means of conquering the elements. He argued that swimming was of limited use in an extreme situation such as a shipwreck: 'L'art de nager est, en ces cas, réduit à bien peu de chose; on est bientôt suffoqué par les vagues ou épuisé de fatigue; d'ailleurs combien d'homme ordinaires, combien de Marins mêmes ne savent pas nager!'.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in his opinion, an invention was needed which would enable man to walk on water as he did on land. La Chapelle presented his *scaphandre* as a more effective solution to the problem of drowning.

La Chapelle's *scaphandre* was primarily advertised as a way of getting troops across rivers, and as a means of saving sailors and ordinary citizens from drowning in the event of a shipwreck. However, in addition to discussing the benefits of the *scaphandre* for military use, he also regarded it as useful for the amusement and health of both sexes. In La Chapelle's view, swimming with a *scaphandre* was a particularly civilized activity, not least because it allowed women to participate in this exercise. He argued, together with health writers, that woman's inactivity was a great ill, but one that could be resolved by using his suit. The *scaphandre* was a complete outfit which could be worn even over ordinary clothes, and thus modesty would never be compromised.

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<sup>66</sup> See *Gazette de Santé*, Thursday 25 November 1773, p. 90-91 and Thursday 23 February 1775, p. 31.

<sup>67</sup> Abbé de la Chapelle, *Traité*, p. xii.

According to La Chapelle, swimming in his suit was far more pleasurable than ordinary swimming because it completely removed the fear of drowning. It also had multiple benefits for health, as it combined moderate exercise with cold water, travel, and the perpetual renewal of air. La Chapelle recommended the formation of a society of *scaphandriers*, who with the help of a table constructed from cork, could enjoy each other's exclusive company and take advantage of floating refreshments throughout their exercise. La Chapelle himself became something of a celebrity when in 1765 he demonstrated the jacket. Before a crowd he would jump into the Seine and drink, eat and take snuff in the water. In 1768, he had the opportunity to perform his act before Louis XV, but apparently the show was a failure and he did not gain royal approval.<sup>68</sup> La Chapelle offered his readers the prospect of a novel social pastime. Packaging all the benefits of a rigorous hygienic régime, with none of the inconveniences, he imagined his *scaphandriers* fitting neatly into existing polite society.

La Chapelle's suit was not the only swimming-related product to be designed and advertised in Paris. The merchant upholsterer Tourillon, who had shops at the *Galleries du Palais Royal* and at *Rue Pavée St André*, sold swimming aids designed by Le Roux and Le Conte. In a supplement to Poncelin's edition of Thevenot's work, Le Roux, in addition to his proposed swimming school, advertised his inventions designed to aid swimming.<sup>69</sup> He observed that traditional swimming aids such as gourds, pig bladders and bundles of rushes were fragile and unsafe. In contrast, his inventions, such as painted bladders made of tin, were solidly

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<sup>68</sup> Frank A. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as individuals: a Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 181-84.

<sup>69</sup> Le Roux, *Supplément à l'Art de Nager*, p. 6. See the Appendix.



constructed and were safe since they could not be punctured. Le Roux also advertised hollow balls made from sheet metal, and waterproof swimming suits of oilskin twill. This special material, he asked the reader to note, was, ‘hermétiquement fermé de toutes parts, concentre tellement toute la chaleur du corps, et il est si impénétrable à l’air et à la pluie, qu’il vaut mieux que les vêtements les plus chauds et les mieux fourrés’.<sup>70</sup> These suits, at a costly 60 livres, were luxury items. Le Conte also sold diving suits or hydrostatic waistcoats, approved by the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, which were designed both as an aid in learning to swim and as a safety measure against drowning.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Turquin received approval from the same body in 1785 for a waterproof haversack, which would enable troops to cross rivers without their supplies getting wet.<sup>72</sup>

### **‘Le Citoyen Turquin - Entrepreneur de L’Ecole de Natation’<sup>73</sup>**

In 1788, Pinel published an article on swimming in the *Gazette de Santé*.<sup>74</sup> He wrote: ‘Un Ecole de Natation récemment formée dans la Capitale, fait espérer que dans toutes les classes de la société, on deviendra moins étranger à un exercice également salutaire et utile, et qu’on attachera toute l’importance qu’il mérite’.<sup>75</sup>

When Turquin established his swimming school in Paris in 1785, he was already the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Affiches, Affiches, Annonces et Avis Divers, ou Journal Général de France Annonces et Avis Divers, ou Journal Général de France*, Supplement to 30 July 1785 (211), p. 2052.

<sup>72</sup> This is referred to in a letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Finances concerning Turquin, dated 19 Pluviose, year 4 (7 February 1796), *Archives Nationales* (hereafter AN), Series F/14/188.

<sup>73</sup> This was the title Turquin gave to himself in a letter proposing a project for the establishment of a cavalry during wartime. See ‘Le Citoyen Turquin Entrepreneur de l’Ecole de Natation à Paris presente un projet pour l’Etablissement d’une cavalerie en tems de Guerre’ 21 April 1793, *Archives de la Guerre*, 1989 (1).

<sup>74</sup> ‘Remarques sur les effets salutaires de l’exercice de nager’, *Gazette de Santé* (1788), n. 23, p. 89.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

proprietor of a bathing establishment known as the *Les Bains Chinois*. This exotic-sounding enterprise had offered simple hot and cold private baths at the *Quai Dauphin* since 1781. Thus, Turquin was already versed in the procedures involved in setting up an establishment along the Seine (as we have seen, there were significant administrative hurdles to negotiate). He was also known to the *Société Royale de Médecine* and the *Académie Royale des Sciences*, two bodies from whom it was crucial to seek approval when embarking on any new venture which pertained to an aspect of public health in the capital.

Turquin presented a description of his proposed swimming school to both bodies in 1784. When seeking expert approval, he stressed the safety of his proposed structure by referring to his successful Chinese Baths, which even the most delicate and timid people had endorsed.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, it was Turquin's prior experience in the bathing industry which secured the enthusiastic support of the *Société Royale de Médecine*:

Nous devons desirer pour l'interet public qu'il soit bientôt executé, et nous pensons que le Sr Turquin déjà connu avantageuseuses? par la construction du bains de rivier connus sous le nom de Bains Chinois, est capable d'entreprendre et de diriger avec succès cette nouvelle construction.<sup>77</sup>

The society had already corresponded with Turquin for three years prior to the submission of his swimming school proposal. He had a proven record of success. It was on this basis that Turquin was granted permission to establish his school.

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<sup>76</sup> SRM 201 d. 10 n. 60.

<sup>77</sup> SRM 201 d. 10 n. 61.

Turquin's school was originally situated at the *Pont de la Tournelle*. For the second season it was relocated to the *Pont de l'Isle Saint-Louis* behind the *Hôtel de Bretonvilliers*. The pool was formed by the enclosure of water created by two moored boats of sixty feet in length, which were placed 24 feet apart. The three inch thick floor of the enclosure was made from fir trees, and sited on the bed of the river. The ends of the bath were enclosed by grilles, which permitted the river water to pass freely through it. The boats housed the cubicles for the use of the pupils. In front of these, on one side, was an open gallery extending over the pool to aid the teaching of swimming. At each end of the structure were enclosed galleries for spectators.<sup>78</sup>

Turquin's school offered comprehensive instruction in the art of swimming. In his *Avis au Public*, he described the form which the lessons took. Instruction was divided into five broad sessions, the first of which was a preparatory study to learn the movements necessary for swimming. This lesson was to be carried out clothed, out of the water, 'couché est suspendu dans le milieu sur des machines imaginées à cet effet, et comme les leçons seront données à couvert, on pourra les prendre dès le premier Avril, et se former aux mouvemens, en attendant que la température de l'air permette de nager'.<sup>79</sup>

The second session taught the students the basics of swimming in the pool. Not until the swimmers were confident in this did they progress to the remaining three lessons, which were learning how to swim fully clothed, swimming in an open river, and finally the optional extra of learning how to dive into the water and

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<sup>78</sup> This description of the school is taken from Turquin's plan which was submitted to the *Société Royale de Médecine* (SRM 201 d. 10 n. 60). It is safe to say that the school was constructed along the lines of the original plan, as the description is corroborated by Thiebault in his *Mémoires*. See, F. Galmettes (ed.), *Mémoires du Général Bon Thiébault, publiés sous les auspices de sa fille Mlle Claire Thiébault, d'après le manuscrit original* (Paris, 1893), vol. 1 (1769-1795), pp. 198-203.



beneath its surface. All of these sessions were to be carried out under the direction of skilled instructors. One could buy or hire *pantalons*, as well as headgear made of elasticated taffeta to protect the hair and all other necessary clothing at Turquin's establishment. Refreshments were also available. The school opened from the beginning of April until the end of September (with the booking office at Turquin's home open on 15 March ). Thus the school catered for every swimming need, from expert tuition, to suitable clothing.

Turquin composed his advertisements for the school in the style of existing literature on swimming. He employed the burgeoning discourse of expertise surrounding this *new* exercise to legitimise his venture. By illustrating the value of swimming to Antiquity, its importance in the preservation of health, the misery caused by drowning, and the need for man to be taught how to swim, Turquin underlined the necessity of his establishment to the capital.

In addition to publishing his *Avis au Public sur l'Établissement d'une Ecole de Natation*, Turquin used both the *Affiches* and the *Journal de Paris* as vehicles for the promotion of his swimming school. However, he knew that his words alone did not validate his project. He stated clearly that the school had the approval of the *Prévot des Marchands*, the *Académie Royale des Sciences* and the *Société Royale de Médecine*. The *Prévot des Marchands*, alongside other municipal officers of Paris and representatives from the Societies and the Military had, at Turquin's invitation,

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<sup>79</sup> Turquin, *Avis au Public*.

publicly witnessed and approved of the school's régime in July of its first season in 1785.<sup>80</sup>

Inspection of the school did not end there. The subsequent year, on 10 August, the *Prévot des Marchands* and members of the *Académie des Sciences* visited the school again. Their report on its progress was published the following month in the *Affiches*.<sup>81</sup> The *Prévot*, satisfied with the school's initial success, contested that it would be in the public's interest to encourage students through the awarding of prizes for swimming achievement. He authorised Turquin to implement these incentives in time for the coming season. Thus, a form of competitive swimming was encouraged by Parisian officials.

### The Swimmers

Entrance to Turquin's swimming school was purchased through a two-tier ticket system. Subscription entitled the pupil to unlimited entry to the school, which opened daily from six o'clock in the morning. First-class ticket holders qualified for an individual cubicle in which to change and keep their belongings. Their payment also subsidised a second-class ticket primarily designed for students at the colleges and the boarding schools.

Whether first or second-class, the cost of the swimming lessons, at 96 livres for the former and 48 livres for the latter, was high. Despite Turquin's grand claims for the improvement of humanity, his lessons were available only to those of a

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<sup>80</sup> The invitation to witness Turquin's swimming lessons was discussed at the public meeting of the *Société Royale de Médecine*, held on 8 July 1785. Minutes of the meetings of the Society, vol. 5, p. 372.

<sup>81</sup> *Affiches, Annonces et Avis Divers, ou Journal Général de France*, Wednesday 13 September, 1786 (1056).

certain social and economic standing: namely the urban elite. Turquin defended the expense of his lessons by drawing the public's attention to the expenditure involved in the upkeep of the baths, and to the skill of the instructors employed. Ultimately, though, he justified the subscription charges by emphasising the necessity of swimming to a child's education. Swimming instruction was presented as a valuable commodity.

The Duc D'Orleans sent his sons to the school in the summer of 1789, whilst they were under the instruction of Madame de Genlis (a woman noted for her commitment to Rousseauian principals of education).<sup>82</sup> Manual work and physical exercise formed a significant part of the princes' educational programme, as set out by Genlis.<sup>83</sup> Escorted by their male under-governor, the princes joined the other pupils for their swimming lessons. However, they were distinguished by the bedrobes of flannelette which they wore when resting by the pool. The other students used simple towelling robes to cover themselves.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, there was a discrepancy between writing on swimming, which centred upon its universal utility - whether male or female, rich or poor, soldier or civilian, swimming was regarded as a worthy activity – and upon who could be taught how to swim in 1780s Paris. Turquin's school appears to have been intended for boys of boarding school age and young men. Young military officers were particularly encouraged to subscribe. Unlike the school at Sorèze, the *Ecole Royale Militaire* in Paris did not have its own swimming pool. Turquin's school provided a service for students training in Paris for a military career.

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<sup>82</sup> See Gabriel de Broglie, *Madame de Genlis* (Paris, 1985), p. 137.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.



Nevertheless, swimming was not an exclusively male activity. As we have seen, La Chapelle envisaged a mixed society of *scaphandriers*.<sup>85</sup> Coyer, in his *Plan de l'Éducation*, also contended the equal importance of teaching men and women to swim, and questioned the notion that it was uncivilized to allow *le sexe* to participate in such an activity:

Dans une Nation bien organisée, le sexe même nagerait. Coréal dit que les femmes de la Floride, sont grandes, fortes, agiles, qu'elles passent à la nage de grandes rivières, en tenant même leur enfant avec le bras, et qu'elles grimpent avec une pareille agilité sur les arbres les plus élevés. Tout cela leur est commun avec les femmes des sauvages du Canada. Etre civilisé, est-ce donc n'avoir ni force, ni adresse, ni bras, ni jambes? Il faut du moins avoir ce qui est nécessaire à la conservation de l'espèce. Il est souverainement important de diminuer la somme des dangers pour les deux sexes.<sup>86</sup>

Although Turquin's school did not offer separate facilities for female swimmers, this did not entirely preclude women from the establishment, as an anecdote from an ex-pupil of the school indicates. General Bon Thiebault, in his *Mémoires*, described the time he spent at Turquin's school.<sup>87</sup> He recalled an incident where a young married woman had come to the school, accompanied by her husband, in order to learn to swim. Although not the first woman to have been seen at the school, her appearance apparently caused quite a stir amongst the young men who were swimming there.

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<sup>84</sup> See, Galmettes (ed.), *Mémoires du Général Bon Thiébault*, Vol. 1 (1769-1795), pp. 198-203. Thiébault described his relief that the presence of the princes did not spoil his fun at school.

<sup>85</sup> See above, Section 'Swimming Products'.

<sup>86</sup> Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique* (Paris, 1770), pp. 83-84.

<sup>87</sup> Galmettes (ed.), *Mémoires du Général Bon Thiébault*, Vol. 1 (1769-1795), pp. 198-203.

She entered the water on her first visit to the school, wearing an outfit which showed nothing of her body but her hands and feet. The young woman in question had already received her preliminary instruction at home, and in addition received private tuition at the school. This woman, because of her wealth and station, had received special treatment.<sup>88</sup> However, in general, decency was of the utmost importance in any water-based enterprise, and prevented women from using mixed facilities.

### **Turquin's Exclusive Privilege**

Turquin's school was a success. In 1787, he was awarded twenty years exclusive privilege by the King in order to run one or several swimming schools in Paris. In a supplement to the *Affiches* dated 10 November 1787, Turquin unveiled his plans to build a permanent swimming school in Paris.<sup>89</sup> With official approval, he estimated the cost of the new swimming school to be 60,000 livres. Turquin was not willing to risk this investment without the assurance of a sufficient number of students to make the expense worthwhile. Therefore, he proposed a plan of subscription, whereby people would pay in advance for their swimming lessons, which would raise capital to contribute towards the total cost of the building. Turquin would personally finance the balance. In exchange for this advance payment, the subscribers would not only receive one year's worth of lessons and a second year's use of the pool, which equalled their original payment, but would also receive a third year's use of the school at no extra cost. Prospective investors were

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<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the English artistocrat Sarah Lennox (1744-1826) was able to offer a Rousseauian education to her children in the 1760s, in which swimming formed part of their studies. See S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994), pp. 244-45.

<sup>89</sup> *Affiches*, 'supplément de la Feuille du 10 Novembre 1787', pp.3091-92.

not obliged to take up the swimming lessons themselves; they could purchase them for another individual. In addition, the subscribers would have their names inscribed on a plaque in the interior of the building, so that their generosity would be recognised by the whole of the city.

Public subscription, which had existed for some time in England, was still quite an innovative way of raising capital in 1780s Paris. The city witnessed a veritable boom in property speculation during the decade prior to the Revolution, as more people sought to invest in new commercial ventures. Turquin, a self-styled entrepreneur, attempted to utilise this method of securing the advance funds he needed to construct his new swimming school.

The plans for the school, which was scheduled to open on 1 May 1788, did not come to fruition. Perhaps people were unwilling to invest in such a *new* activity. Alternatively, it could have simply been bad timing as the financial crisis of 1787 put an end to the boom of the early years of the decade. The abolition of the privilege system in the summer of 1789 resulted in Turquin having to re-market his swimming venture.

Undeterred by the setback of 1788, Turquin published a second (unsuccessful) proposal for a permanent school in 1790.<sup>90</sup> Having already packaged his original school in terms of civic utility, Turquin now increased his patriotic zeal. With the collapse of the *Ancien Régime*, the market for luxury products largely disappeared. Turquin, whose client base had been the urban elite of Paris, now

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<sup>90</sup> Turquin, *Projet d'une école de natation, en faveur de la garde bourgeoise nationale de Paris* (Paris, 1790).



turned to a more reliable source of income - the army.<sup>91</sup> In 1790, he published a proposal for a new swimming school designed to favour the National Guard of Paris and their children.<sup>92</sup>

The scheme offered half-price subscription both at his existing school, at the *Pont de L'Isle Saint Louis*, and at the new school. Following the pattern of his 1787 bid to build a permanent structure, Turquin called for advance public subscription to fund the venture. In return, he was offering the Capital an architectural triumph with a practical use: 'Le plan de son Ecole de Natation peut en faire un Monument qui ne le cédera en rien à ceux des anciens; il joindra l'agréable à l'utile'.<sup>93</sup> The new school would host Roman-style tournaments on Sundays and feast days; prizes would be given to the best swimmers. In addition to providing a cut-price service for the military, the new school would also offer twenty-five free places a year to people working on the Seine. Turquin declared his intention to give a proportion of his annual earnings to poor widows, whose husbands had perished whilst working on the river. He was at pains to stress his role as a good citizen who was supplying an essential public service. Although Turquin was keen to emphasise the *inclusive* nature of his swimming service, in 1790 he continued to view his rather *exclusive* clientele as a selling feature. As we have seen, the Duc D'Orleans had sent his sons there in the summer of 1789, and Turquin advertised this in his proposal. However, as the Revolution progressed, any activity or individual which had been associated with *Ancien Régime* privilege was called into question. Turquin had to find new ways of staying afloat in Revolutionary Paris.

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<sup>91</sup> Although young officers and cadets did go to Turquin's school, the school had not been specifically designed for them.

<sup>92</sup> Turquin, *Projet d'une école de natation*.

## Conclusion

The case of swimming demonstrates that exercise was at the crossroads of several important Enlightenment debates – namely those surrounding health, education and military reform – which all focused upon the importance of social utility. The ability to swim was discussed as a universal need. The mother, the child, and the military officer, it was held, should all swim in order to maintain health and to minimise the risk that water presented.

Swimming debates also highlight the complexity of Enlightenment thinking regarding the relationship between, man, society and nature. Swimming was at once a natural and civilized activity. As a means of preserving health, it utilised the ‘natural’ resources of movement and cold water. Equally, the ability to swim represented a control over nature, where man had once been at the mercy of the elements. Health writers drew on natural ideals, but these had to be negotiated within an urban context. The decline of swimming was associated with the degeneration of society and the migration of people from the countryside to the town. However, as we have seen, Turquin brought swimming into the heart of the capital.

The advice contained in health and educational literature was utilised within the market-place. A new dynamic model of the body, incorporating ideals of Antiquity and rural life, was packaged to cater for the taste of the urban exerciser. As we have seen, Rousseau maintained that in order for swimming to form part of the education of the elite, it would have to become a costly enterprise. In the event, he was correct in this assertion. Turquin marketed swimming in such a way as to

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

render it a desirable activity - one for which parents were willing to pay a significant price in order that their children could benefit from the activity.



### *Conclusion: Swimming into the Revolution*

A decree was passed by the National Convention in 1793, stating that swimming should form part of a National Education: 'Pour acquérir de l'agilité de l'adresse et de la force, les enfants se livrent aux exercices analogues à leur âge, et particulièrement aux marches, aux exercices militaires et à la natation, autant que les localités le permettent'.<sup>1</sup> This measure left the virtue of swimming as an exercise in no doubt. After all, for an exercise already associated with ancient Rome, the road to Republicanism was short.

From the publication of Rousseau's *Émile*, swimming had been characterised as an exercise which carried with it moral worth. In an attack on what he regarded as the apathy of the urban elite, Pinel was cynical about the likelihood of swimming being widely practised in the Capital: 'Mais sur ce point, comme sur beaucoup d'autres, nos usages seront encore long-temps en contradiction avec nos lumières, et les vrais moyens de nous bien porter et de nous rendre heureux, seront les derniers à nous occuper'.<sup>2</sup> With the onset of the Revolution, discussions of swimming were couched in overtly political terms.

In 1777, the Parisian authorities had refused to grant permission to the Abbé Arnaud to establish his bathhouses and swimming school, despite the approval of the *Société Royale de Médecine* and the *Académie Royale des Sciences*.<sup>3</sup> Outraged by this rebuttal, Arnaud re-published his original plans in 1790, together with all

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<sup>1</sup> 5 Brumaire, year 2 (October 26, 1793). See *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860* (Paris, 1910), première série (1787 à 1799), volume LXXVII, p. 575 and 'Projet d'éducation nationale, concernant la natation, présenté à la commission des travaux publics par le citoyen Turquin instituteur de l'école de natation à Paris', AN, F/14/188.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette de Santé*, 1788, n. 23, p. 89.

correspondence relating to his proposals, in order to vindicate his patriotic commitment to the venture.<sup>4</sup> He also included an account of his treatment during ‘le despotisme ministériel’, and a scathing report on his rival Turquin’s swimming school.<sup>5</sup> Arnaud’s story reads as a tale of false objections, bribery, corruption and charlatanism, of which he was the innocent victim. In his attack on Turquin, Arnaud cast the swimming entrepreneur as a charlatan who kept his school in a ‘vile’ condition, simply out to make money at the expense of his customers: ‘Voilà, n’en déplaise au charlatanisme de sieur Turquin, qui a su mettre à profit mon projet philanthropique, à quoi se réduit tout l’art de nager’.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the facts, Arnaud clearly felt that figures such as Turquin had robbed him of his philanthropic vocation. His story illustrates two clear points. Firstly, there was a great deal of money to be made in the bathing industry, and prime sites on the Seine were fiercely contested. Secondly, there was a tension between the view of swimming instruction as a commercial enterprise and that of a public service. Turquin was surely aware of this conflict when, in the spring of 1796, in a further attempt to establish a second swimming school, he re-emerged, no longer an ‘entrepreneur’, but an ‘instituteur’.<sup>7</sup> Turquin recast himself as an authority on swimming education within a Directory atmosphere, which was more conducive to the *practical* implementation of legislative reform, and more welcoming to private initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> See above, Chapter Seven, Section ‘Swimming for the Public Good’.

<sup>4</sup> Abbé Arnaud, *Etablissement qui interesse l’utilité publique et la décoration de la capital* (Paris, 1790). See also his original proposal, ‘Établissement qui intéresse l’utilité publique et la décoration de la capitale de la France’ (Vienna, 1777), *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Joly de Fleury 1080, Fol 263.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. ii.

<sup>6</sup> Report on Turquin’s school contained in Arnaud’s *Etablissement*, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In his correspondence with various public authorities, Turquin used the Convention's 1793 legislation on swimming to promote his own expertise and position in the nascent swimming industry. He submitted a plan to install a swimming school in every *Département*, at minimal cost to the State. Leading by example, he argued that swimming schools, in order to reduce State expenditure, should be privately owned, but have a responsibility to maintain the upkeep of the pool and standards of teaching. Turquin contended that soldiers, and people working on bridges or engaged in public works near the river, should have free lessons. However, other citizens should pay, in order for these privately-run enterprises to survive.<sup>8</sup> Swimming instruction would be regulated by the use of Turquin's own treatise on swimming. This would be distributed to every *Département* to ensure that the entire Republic learned to swim by the same principals and methods. As for the swimming schools themselves, Turquin's *L'Art de Nager* also included instruction on how to build a school, along the lines of his own, so that others could set themselves up in business at the lowest possible cost.

Turquin's plan to become the premier swimming instructor to the Republic did not come to fruition, despite general approval of his initiatives. Indeed, swimming within the French educational system appears to disappear rapidly from view. Martyn Lyons has argued that the story of Revolutionary education was one of 'sweeping, imaginative schemes, but very limited achievement'.<sup>9</sup> This certainly applied to the legislation concerning the introduction of swimming to a national curriculum.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> M. Lyons, *France Under the Directory* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 84.



However, Turquin's Parisian swimming school survived in the hands of his son-in-law Deligny, who later built a new floating pool. This was constructed from a large barge with its centre hollowed out, allowing access to the river. Surrounding the swimming area were changing cubicles, private *salons*, common rooms, apartments for the royal family, a restaurant and club room. The pool attracted a distinguished clientele including Charles X and Louis Phillippe (who, as we have seen, had learned to swim in Turquin's original school in the summer of 1789). The emphasis was upon entertainment, rather than swimming instruction. The pool was sold in 1840, but continued to be used for swimming. A modernised version of the Deligny pool was moored near to the Musée D'Orsay until 1993.<sup>10</sup>

Turquin's dream to build a purpose-built swimming pool, the architecture of which would be a source of civic pride, would not be realised until the 1860s and 1870s, when *piscines* formed part of 'un complexe cultural complet', incorporating restaurants, gymnasiums and massage parlours.<sup>11</sup> Swimming became part of a burgeoning culture of leisure; the emphasis upon physical reform had been supplanted. (This is witnessed by the fact that the army continued to issue its swimming instruction in rivers, rather than swimming pools, for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>) Swimming took on alternative guises; it signified both the health-giving properties of the seaside resort or spa town, and the Romantic, sensual pleasure associated with immersion in water.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen, *An Intimate History of the Swimming Pool: The Springboard in the Pond* (Massachusetts, 1998), pp. 19-21.

<sup>11</sup> See, A. Le Bas, 'Des piscines et des villes: genèse et développement d'un équipement de loisir', *Histoire Urbaine* 1 (2000), pp. 145-62.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> For the rise of seaside resorts, see A. Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840*, Eng. Trans. (Berkeley, 1994). For an account of Romantic attitudes to swimming, see C. Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseuse* (London, 1992).

The disappearance in the nineteenth century of the educational aspects of swimming, which had been encouraged in the late *Ancien Régime*, contributed to a more general neglect of physical education. The short-lived *Ecole Centrales* of the Directory all but ignored physical activity, and Napoleon's *Lycées*, although distinguished by their militaristic discipline, did not utilise exercise as a means to toughen pupils.<sup>14</sup> A disregard for physical education in schools continued until the Second Republic, despite legislation to make it a compulsory part of the secondary and primary curriculum in 1853 and 1869, respectively.<sup>15</sup> It was only with the crushing defeat of the Franco-Prussian War (1870) that action was taken to incorporate exercise into community life.

Indeed, there are comparisons to be drawn between discussions of physical reform which took place after the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Both defeats at the hands of the disciplined Prussian/German troops induced in France a period of self-reflection, which produced calls to strengthen the nation through increased physical activity. However, in contrast to the Seven Years War, the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War saw the soldier, and not the officer, as the focus for reform. It was to the health of the working-class that the attention of the State turned. In this case, it was gymnastics, following the style initiated in Germany by Jahn, which was encouraged in preference to swimming. However, it was urban communities, rather than schools, which established

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<sup>14</sup> See, Lyons, *France Under the Directory and his Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (London, 1994), 'Law Codes and Lycées', pp. 94-110.

<sup>15</sup> E. Weber, 'Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France: Opium of the Working Classes', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp. 70-98.

gymnastic societies in order to improve strength and discipline amongst young males.<sup>16</sup>

Even after 1870, swimming appears not to have been a part of school life.<sup>17</sup> Pierre de Coubertin, an admirer of the English sporting culture personified within the public school system, encouraged organised physical activities in French *lycées*. However, he chose to promote games such as rugby and football, rather than swimming, an exercise which was held in high regard by English schools, particularly Eton.<sup>18</sup> Coubertin, who founded the first modern Olympics in 1896, did include swimming in his instructions to the organisers in Athens, but it was an exercise for which he evidently cared little.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the swimming event was little short of a disaster, as the swimmers struggled with restrictive costumes in the freezing spring-time Mediterranean. There were no French winners.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph N. Moody, *French Education since Napoleon* (New York, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> Sprawson argues that in the nineteenth century, the English were regarded as the best swimmers in the world. The first swimming society in England was set up by a group of old Etonians in 1828. Eton was the first English institution to offer swimming classes. See Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur*, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> See John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago, 1981).



## Appendix

Le Roux, *Supplément a la Iieme edition de l'art de nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement par Thévenot: contenant le Plan d'une Ecole publique de Natation, la Description de divers nouveaux scaphandres, et de différents pantalons impénétrables à l'eau, tant pour passer une riviere, sans mouiller ses habits, que pour sauver même dans l'hiver ceux qui seroient en danger de se nager* (Paris, 1782), pp. 7-12.

### *DESCRIPTION des divers scaphandres représentés dans la figure gravée.*

N<sup>o</sup>. I. **L**ES cinq vessies ou boules  
de fer pesent trois livres.

N<sup>o</sup>. II. Les cinq balons de cuir gras  
ont la forme de la figure n<sup>o</sup>. I.

N<sup>o</sup>. III. a, a, représente les ban-  
des qui font sur les épaules; b, le  
suspensoir qui passe entre les  
cuisses.

N<sup>o</sup>. IV. Les cinq boules de coutil  
ciré ont la forme du n<sup>o</sup>. I.

N<sup>o</sup>. V. Les balons pleins de liége,  
& ceux qui sont pleins d'air, se  
mettent dans un petit sac long  
& étroit.

N<sup>o</sup>. VI. L'eau ne peut entrer d'aucune maniere dans le pantalon figuré dans le n<sup>o</sup>. VI : il est fermé de toutes parts, & se termine en gants pour les bras & en bottes pour les jambes.

N<sup>o</sup>. VII. L'autre pantalon de taffetas a la même forme.

La partie supérieure des deux pantalons peut se terminer aussi par un masque & des yeux de verre.

Le pantalon, sur-tout celui de couil ciré, a été imaginé non-seulement pour passer l'eau, sans se mouiller, mais encore pour aller chercher, tout habillé, une personne qui se noieroit dans le tems le plus rigoureux de l'hiver.

*TARIF*

*T A R I F du prix des différents  
objets qui servent à nager.*

- N<sup>o</sup>. I. **L** E S cinq vessies ou bou-  
les de fer creux & rempli d'air ,  
qui font nécessairement furnager  
un homme , & par le moyen des-  
quelles on peut en sauver un au-  
tre, 30 liv.
- N<sup>o</sup>. II. Les cinq balons couverts de  
cuir gras , & par-dessus une toile  
cirée , 15 liv.
- N<sup>o</sup>. III. Le scaphandre en forme  
de cerceau , garni de boules de  
liège , couvertes de toile , 10 liv.
- N<sup>o</sup>. IV. Le scaphandre de boules  
de coutil ciré & plein d'air ,  
10 liv.
- N<sup>o</sup>. V. Le scaphandre de balons  
pleins de liège , 8 liv.

*b*



N<sup>o</sup>. VI. Le pantalon universel , &  
fait de coutil ciré , pour appren-  
dre à nager dans l'hiver , & pour  
sauver , sans se mouiller , les  
noyés dans cette saison rigou-  
reuse , 40 liv.

N<sup>o</sup>. VII. Autre Pantalon universel  
de taffetas ciré, pour voyager par  
le plus grand froid & par une  
pluie continuelle , sans éprouver  
les inconvénients ni de l'un ni  
l'autre , 60 liv.

*Nota.* Cette espee de vêtement,  
hermétiquement fermé de toutes  
parts, concentre tellement toute la  
chaleur du corps , & il est si impé-  
nétrable à l'air & à la pluie , qu'il  
vaut mieux que les vêtements les  
plus chauds & les mieux fourrés.

*EXPLICATION de la figure  
représentant le plan d'une Ecole  
de Natation.*

**A. LOGEMENT** du Directeur  
de l'Ecole.

Dans les chambres du rez-de-chauffée, on mettra les vêtements des Eleves & d'autres personnes qui viendront à cette Ecole, avec des numéros pareils à ceux du pantalon qu'on leur donnera pour nager avec décence.

**B.** Pont pour entrer dans cette Ecole.

**c.** Loge de la Sentinelle.

**d.** Loge du Portier ou Suisse.

**e.** Batelet où sera l'Instituteur, qui suivra & guidera ceux qui apprennent à nager.

*f. f.* Deux poteaux auxquels sera attachée une corde bien tendue, sur laquelle roulera une poulie & un cordeau, avec des bandes soutenant le Nageur, afin que ne pouvant point enfoncer dans l'eau, il puisse être tout entier aux leçons du Maître.

*g. g. g.* Grosse corde dont on fait mention ci-dessus.

Les *6 h.* désignent des bancs, tant pour les spectateurs, que pour ceux qui amènent les Elèves à l'Ecole.

*M. M. M. M.* désignent le canal circulaire, où avec divers scaphandres on apprend à nager seul & sans guide.

*N. N.* désignent le canal représenté de profil, & en élévation.

*F I N.*



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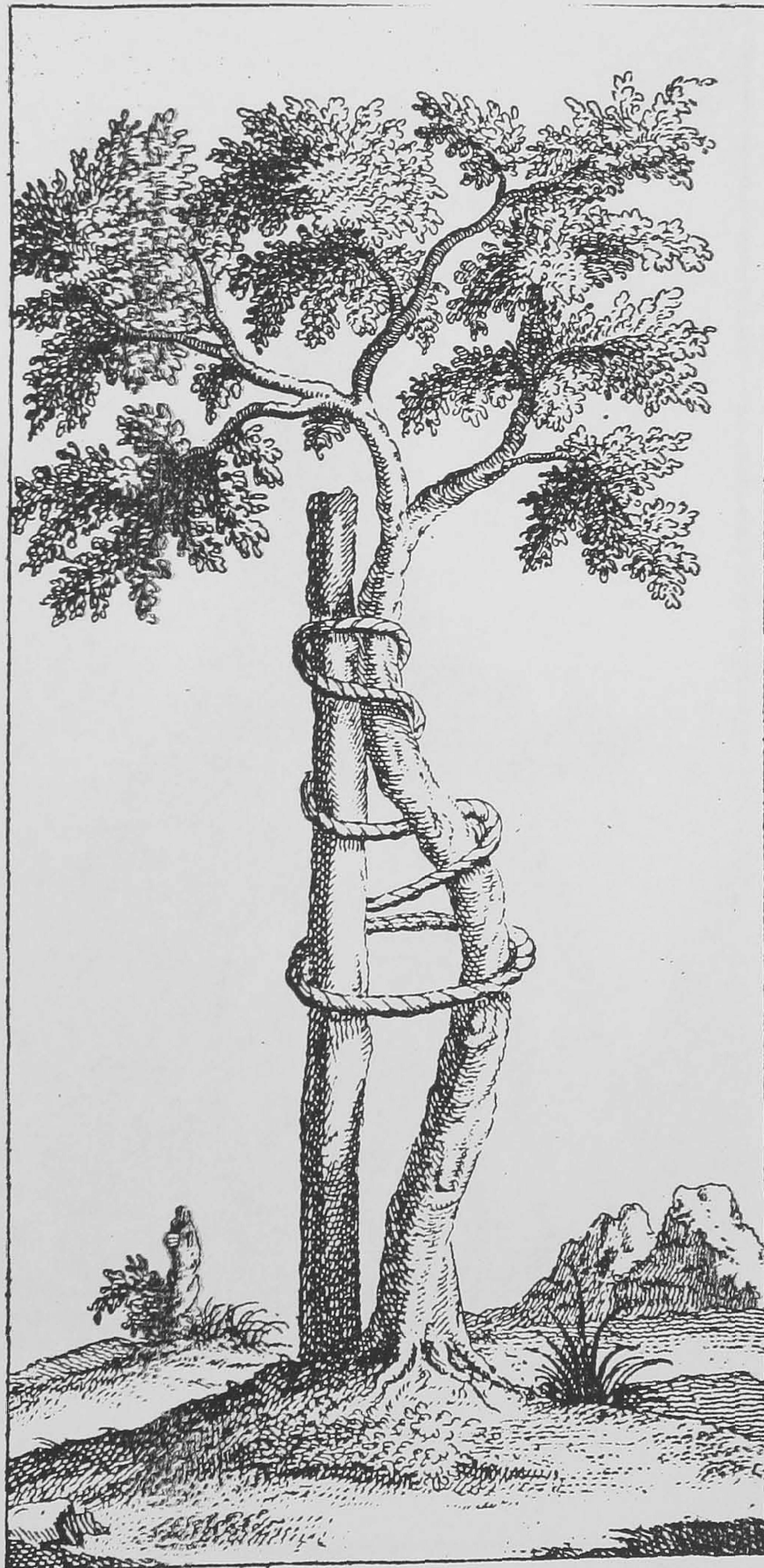
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### Illustration Number One

Sapling tied to a stake, contained in Nicholas Andry de Bois Regard, *Orthopédie: ou l'art de prevenir et de corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps* (Paris, 1741), vol. 1, book 3 'Jambes courbes', p. 282.





## Illustration Number Two

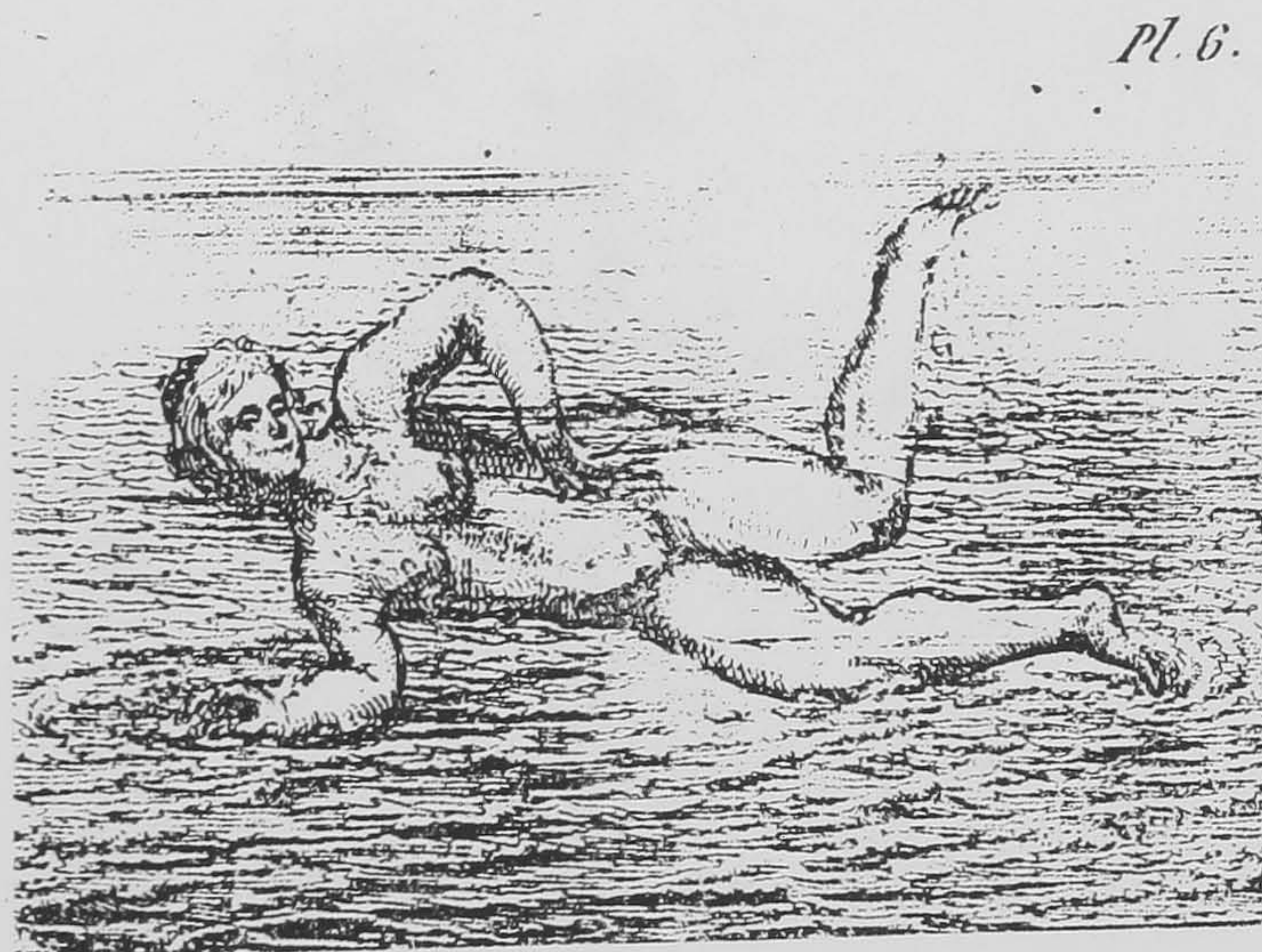
Girl correcting her posture, contained in Nicholas Andry de Bois Regard, *Orthopédie: ou l'art de prevenir et de corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps* (Paris, 1741), vol. 1, book 2 'Moyens d'empêcher les enfans de porter mal la tête', p. 86.





### Illustration Number Three

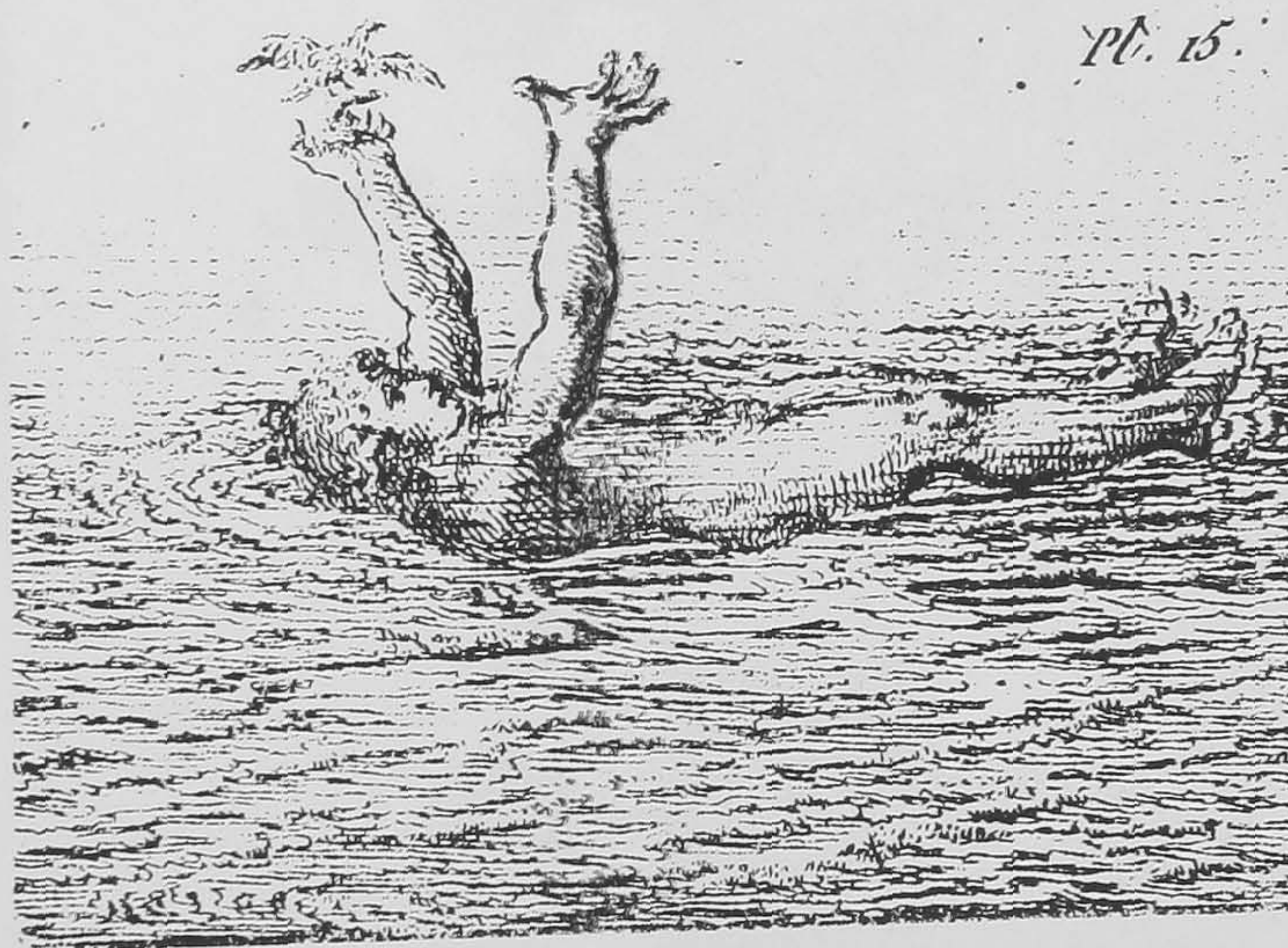
‘Maniere de nager sur le côté’, engraved by Charles Moëtte, contained in Thévenot, Melchisedech, *L’Art de Nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement..Nouvelle Edition revue, corrigée et considérablement augmentée par M.P.D.L.C.A.A.P.* (J.C. Poneclin de la Roche Tilhac), (Paris, 1781).





#### Illustration Number Four

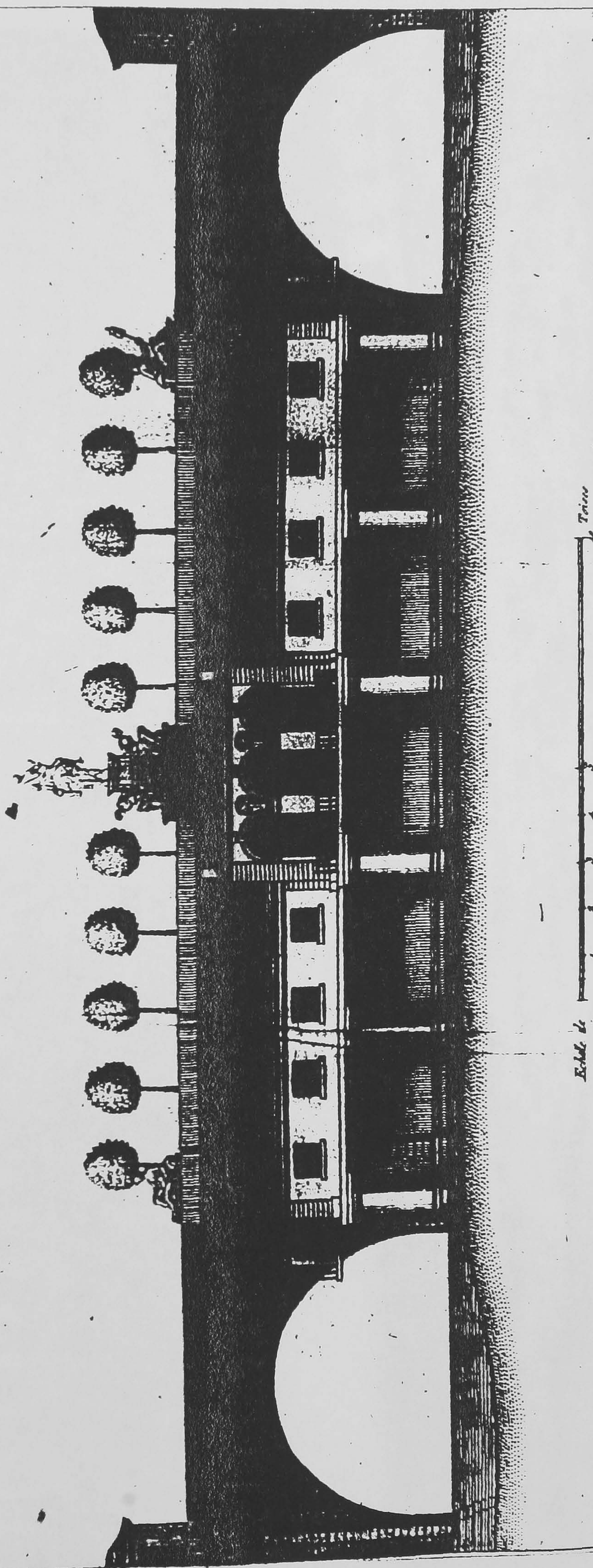
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*Projet d'un Etablissement de Bains publics, au pourtour des murs de l'Éperon du Pont neuf.*

*Elévation du Bâtimet.*

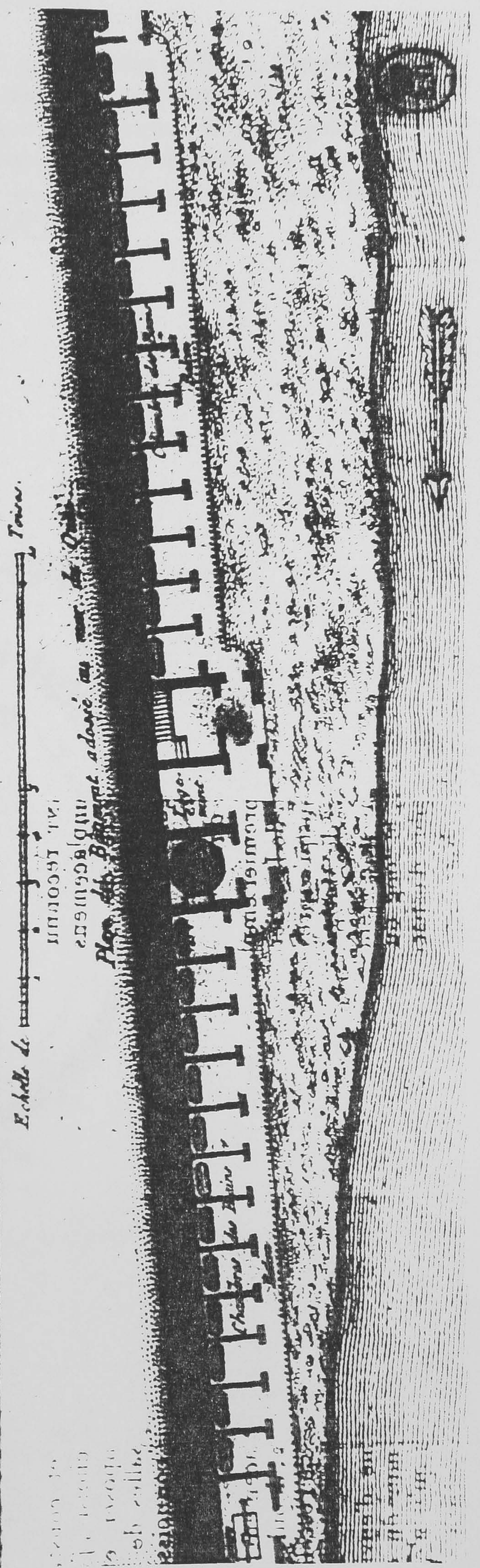
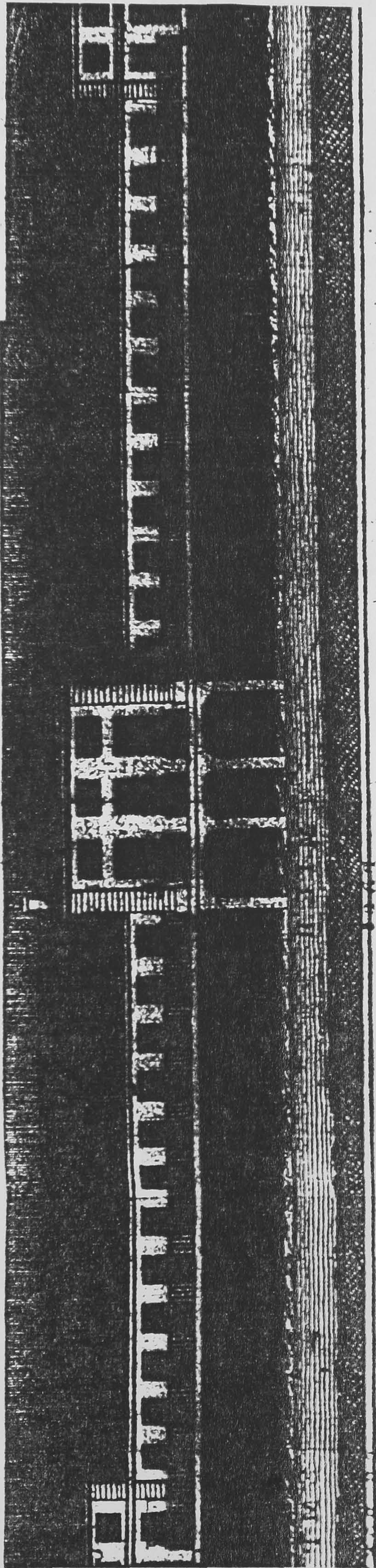




Arnaud, Etablissement qui interesse l'Utilité Publique et la Décoration de la Capital  
(Paris, 1790).

Projet d'un Etablissement de Bains publics, le long du Quai adjacent le Pont - Royal.  
et d'une école de natation; présentée au Roi, à la Famille Royale, aux Ministres, à M. le Lieutenant  
Général de Police et à M. le Prévôt des Marchands le 26 Juin 1777 par M. l'Abbé Arnaud Chêne

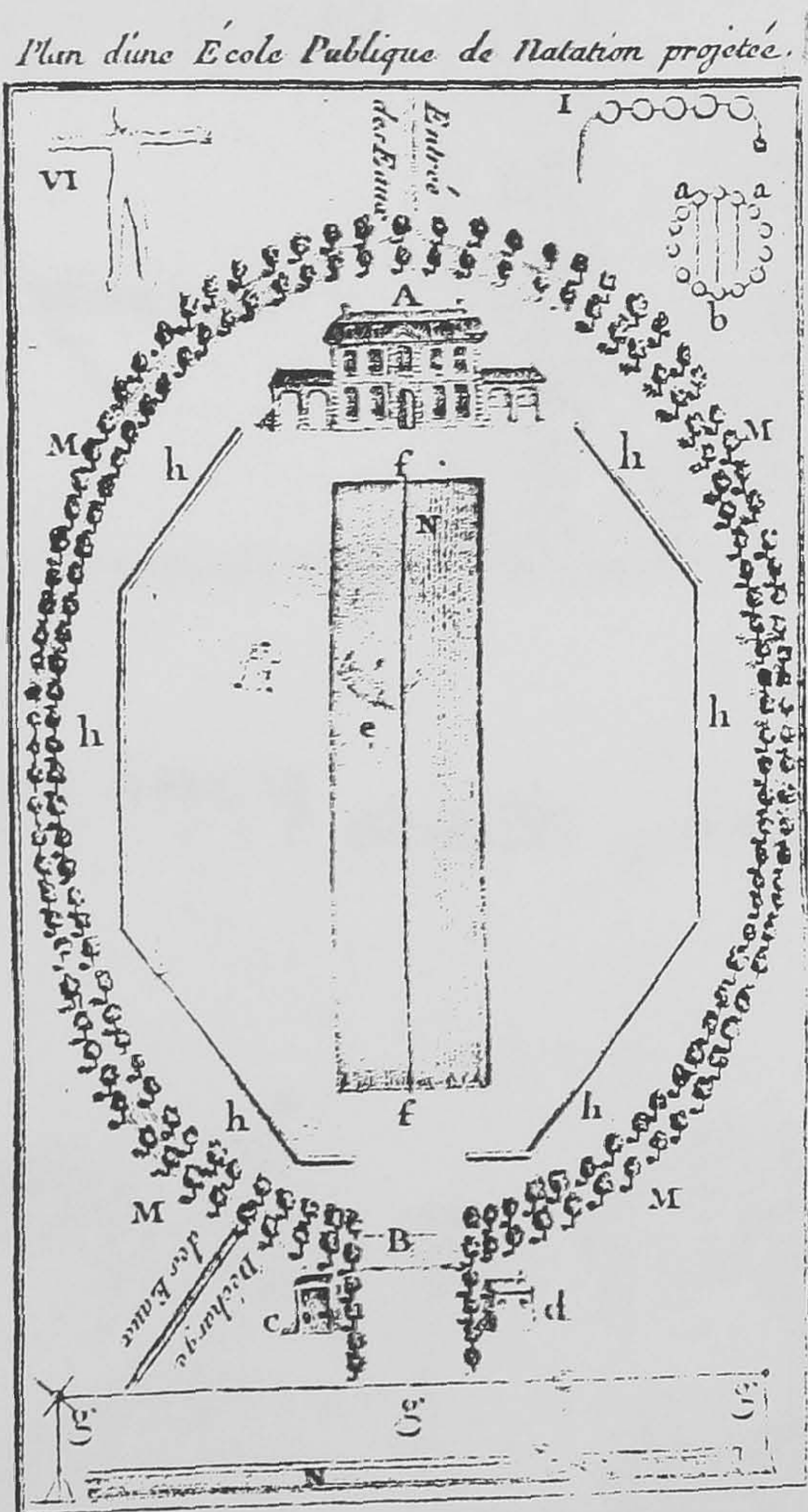
Elevation du Bâtimet.





### Illustration Number Seven

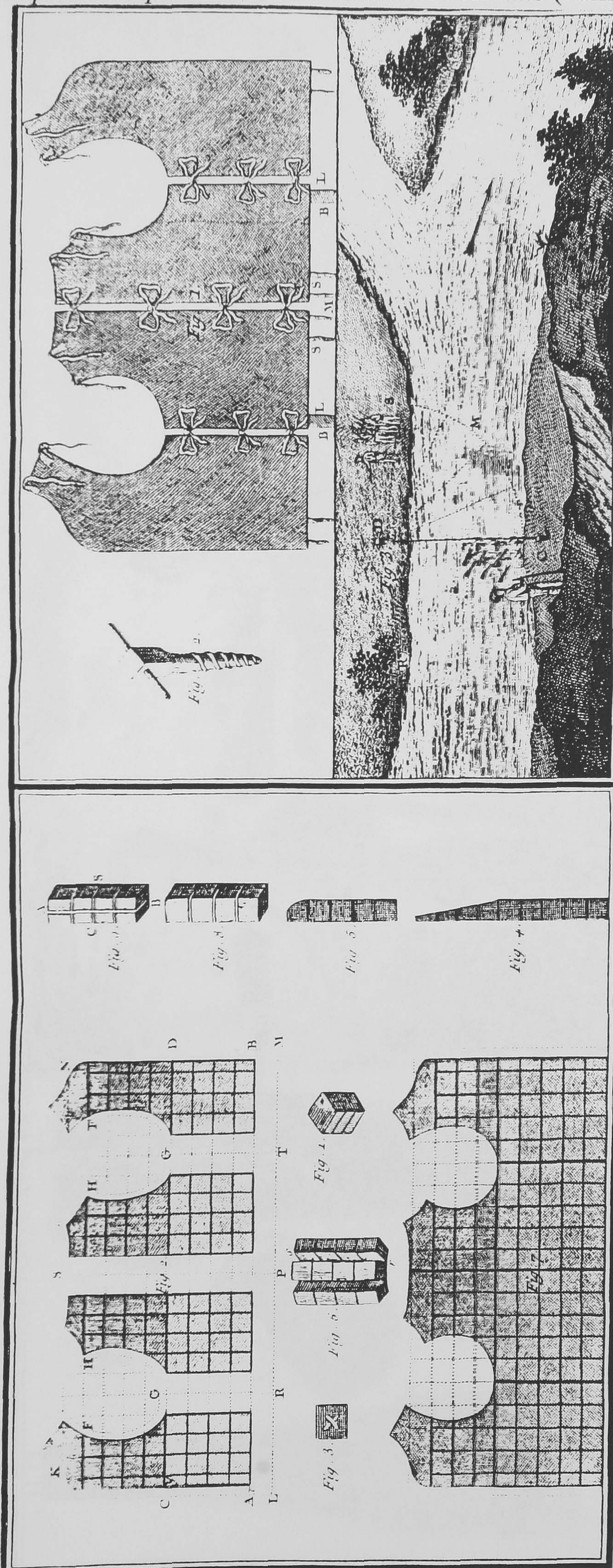
'Plan d'une École Publique de Natation projetée', contained in Le Roux, *Supplément a la Iieme edition de l'art de nager, avec des avis pour se baigner utilement par Thévenot: contenant le Plan d'une Ecole publique de Natation, la Description de divers nouveaux scaphandres, et de différents pantalons impénétrables à l'eau, tant pour passer une riviere, sans mouiller ses habits, que pour sauver même dans l'hiver ceux qui seroient en danger de se nager* (Paris, 1782).





## Illustration Number Eight

Plan of a diving suit and its uses for mobilising troops across rivers, designed and engraved by J. Robert, contained in De La Chapelle, *Traité de la Construction Théorique et Pratique du Scaphandre, ou du Bateau de l'Homme* (Paris, 1775).





# Illustration Number Nine

Plan of a diving suit and its uses for hunting and fishing, designed and engraved by J. Robert, contained in De La Chapelle, *Traité de la Construction Théorique et Pratique du Scaphandre, ou du Bateau de l'Homme* (Paris, 1775).

